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Clash! rung the snaky swords, and the combat opened.

"MR. HEROD DEAN: 'SIR—This will inform you of a fact of which, evidently, you have been ignorant, up to this time. Estelle Berkeley is the betrothed of a gentleman. She—whom you have been following so persistently, and annoying in a manner foreign to the acts of an honorable man—has grown tired of your haunting presence, which has, in her opinion, assumed the proportion of an insult. The matter has been referred to me; and I, as her affianced husband, demand that opportunity for satisfaction, at a weapon's point, which no man, unless he be a coward, will refuse. My representative will call to-morrow with yours, before noon, to-morrow. For reasons that you will admit, this had best be retained a strict secret.'"

"HUBERT WYNE, 'LORD CHAUNCEY.' The note fell fluttering to the carpet. 'Her affianced husband! A duel!' He enunciated the words as one will who can scarce believe his senses."

"My God!—that this should be the woman—so beautiful, so fascinating—that I have made myself an outcast to follow!—only to follow, and live where I could look at her; know she recognized my presence. It was but a few hours ago that she bade me good-night—all smiles, all sweetness—and gave her hand to the passionate pressure of my lips; and now, ere the tongue of the clock strikes twelve, I am challenged on her account—ay, it is at her request—by her affianced husband! This is the hardest blow of all—well, am I fit to live? But, stop! I will fight him! I will wrench his heart out with my sword!—I'll laugh at her!—no, no, no; wait: what should I do? I can not avoid it—"

"Fight! (hic) Fight who? What's the matter here, Dean? I say, (hic) what's the row? Why, bless my heart! you're white as a tombstone, and look mad as a bull in the (hic)—the arena!"

The speaker was a man several years the junior of Herod Dean, and who had entered the room just at the conclusion of the other's outburst.

His hat was on the back of his head, hair disheveled, and general appearance and stagger indicating that he was right from the 'club,' with brain rather the worse for liquor.

The two were room-mates. 'Read that,' said Dean, in reply, pointing to the crumpled paper at his feet.

The young man picked it up.

'O-h, a duel!' he exclaimed. 'Yes—a duel!' Herod Dean was leaning against the mantel-piece, again looking thoughtfully into the fire.

'Well, are you going to fight?' 'Am I?'—suddenly and forcibly. 'Do I look like a coward, Percy Wolfe?' 'Aw—(hic)—no-o; can't say you do,' with a half-grave, half-comical survey of his 'chum.'

'You will be my second,' continued Dean.

'Of course I will!' And Wolfe was

slightly familiar with such matters, for he immediately added, in a business manner:

'You'd better go to work now—make out your will, and so forth, you know. See, there's no telling how these things will turn out; and, in case you are unfortunate, why it's better to prevent trouble among relations by putting law on paper—'

'I attended to that some time ago.'

'Oh, I did you?' in surprise.

'Yes.' Then Dean advanced, and laid a hand on his friend's shoulder.

'Percy Wolfe,' he said, very solemnly, 'you are an American, like myself.'

'I believe I am,' wonderingly.

Wolfe appeared to recover, as if by magic, from the influence of his liquor.

'You are going back to your native soil next week?'

'Yes.'

'Wolfe,' eying him steadfastly, and speaking with much emotion, 'I have a little girl over there—my child. I love her as a father only can love. A short time ago I sent my will, with a letter, to a friend—a man who was my mate at college—instructing him to think of me as dead, and have others think the same. In that will I provided for my daughter. Her name is Pearl. I believe that Claude Paine, the friend of whom I speak, is honorable. Yet, Percy, I want you to promise me that when you reach America, you will find my precious Pearl and see if every thing is right.'

'This is news!' exclaimed Wolfe, in astonishment. 'You never told me that you were a father.'

'It has been a secret—and you shall learn that secret presently. But, will you promise? will you find Pearl Rochester, at Washington, and see that she has her own?'

The promise was given.

Then the two sat there, through the remainder of the night, till the gray shades of dawn were creeping in at the windows, discussing the preliminaries to the duel; and in that time Herod Dean made known his life-secret to this warm, faithful friend.

Lord Chauncey's second was prompt to call before noon, and the affair of meeting was satisfactorily arranged between that worthy and Wolfe.

Twelve hours later.

When the bell of a distant clock proclaimed eleven, Herod Dean and his friend left their rooms, and proceeded toward the spot agreed upon.

The house occupied by Lord Chauncey was an ancient-looking edifice, standing alone, and surrounded by an extensive garden.

In this garden were many places admirably adapted to the coming scene; but one especially, between three monstrous shrub-bushes, within a semicircle of trees, had been selected by the nobleman.

The ground was hard and smooth; the situation was screened.

There was a moon in the starry sky, that seemed to pour a saddened radiance on the place; and an occasional waft of wind whispered mournfully through the leafless, spectral trees and bare-stalked shrubs.

Two men were waiting—one engaged in rubbing a long, sharp sword with a piece of chamois skin; and the other, gloomy and silent, gazing in the direction of the gate.

Soon the other parties were on hand; and—doing away with useless prelude—the enemies were placed, weapon in hand, face to face.

'Lord Chauncey,' said Dean, 'remember that this quarrel is of your seeking. I am no coward; yet, to shed blood is a serious thing. And I ask if there is no other way to adjust this?'

'Guard!' was the answer, sharp and savage, as the speaker advanced quickly. 'Look to yourself—'

Clash! rung the snaky swords, and the combat opened.

Both were good swordsmen; the match, in point of strength, was equal.

Circling and darting, ringing and scraping, twisting, twining, whirling, like two supple snakes, whizzed and coiled the dueling swords in the hands of their masters; and nothing was heard but the whizzing, striking sound and deep breathing of the combatants.

Suddenly Dean slipped. His weapon fell slightly. Quick as a flash, the Englishman lunged at the exposed breast of his antagonist, and pierced him through and through.

The stricken man reeled backward, tossed his arms wildly aloft, and fell into the arms of Percy Wolfe, who sprang to catch him.

'Wolfe! Wolfe!' he articulated, in a choking voice, 'remember your promise! God! I am dying!'

'Horace Rochester, I will remember!' whispered Percy.

Lord Chauncey was coolly wiping his sword.

Two figures were approaching rapidly from the house—a man and woman. When they came up, the latter asked:

'Is it over?'

'Yes,' and the Englishman continued, addressing her companion: 'There he is, doctor. You had best be quick in removing him.'

Wolfe would have preferred to bury his friend; but, as the occurrence might possibly become known, and as there existed such bonds of secrecy, he made no objection when the medical gentleman called for assistance, and lifted Dean in his arms.

The motionless form was borne out at the gate, and placed behind the cloth screen of a gig that was in waiting, and the doctor drove off with his ghastly charge.

Lord Chauncey turned to the woman, who, by his side, was watching the retreating forms.

'Come, Estelle,' he said, 'let us return to the house. Dany,' to his second, 'bring both swords.'

Percy Wolfe embarked for America on a day of the following week. And on the day after his departure, there was an officer of the law in dialogue with the lady of the house where he had roomed. The object of his visit was to ask:

'Where is Herod Dean? When did his 'chum,' Percy Wolfe, leave here?'

CHAPTER II. NEWS OF A DEATH.

HARK! The bells!

New Year's Day at the National Capital; heralded by the Metropolitan chiming—a new greeting for the season here, and one of sweet solemnity.

The weather was dull, damp and sickly. But this mattered nothing; 'society' con- quered the whisperings of discretion, and moved, as it ever will, despite inclement skies, in keeping with the laws of festivity ensuing upon the last, parting scene of the Old Year's Christmas month.

Here, where Fashion would seem to center its rarest pictures during the Holidays, and smile with all the charmed radiance of woman's loveliness, the day was lively, and the gloomy clouds forgotten by pleasure- bent votaries of sociability.

A house, not much more than the distance of an arrow-shot from Lafayette Square—and which escaped mention among the long list that appeared in the *Gazette*—was glittering in its interior; with broad salons arranged in all the lavish grandeur of wealth and taste, and liveried sons of Ebon-skin flitting hither and thither, in useful capacities.

The callers had been many at this point; and yet the shining tables groaned beneath their weight of delicacies—rich wines and fruits, and all that could intoxicate a guest by sight, scent, or indulgence.

But now there was a calm. The merry voices that had only a few moments previous awakened echoes of jest, or drawn a companion, in pleasant argument, through the dreamy bowers of Erudition, had ceased; and the gorgeous surroundings looked bare without their recent foreground of grouping humans. All had disappeared—all, save one.

Seated at a piano, her elbow on the mirrored wood, and face resting in her jeweled hand, was a woman—a queen, it would appear, well fitted to reign in this modern Temple of Delight.

As her head bowed, and one hand lay carelessly on the keys, her attitude was one of thought—full of grace, a subject for an artist.

A brunette, and beautiful.

PEARL OF PEARLS; OR CLOUDS AND SUNBEAMS.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.

Author of "Hoodwinked," "Flaming Talisman," "Hercules, the Hunchback," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUEL IN THE GARDEN.

A SUITE of rooms in the English Metropolis—in what particular locality is of no moment to the reader.

It was night—an ugly night, of damp, and wet, and chill; when starving beggars shivered and groaned, and the higher class drew near to their warm hearths.

A man of muscular build, and aristocratic mien, sat before the glowing grate, with elbows on his knees, and chin bowed to his hands, while he fixed an unwavering stare on the burning coals.

He was alone; yet not alone, for reverie—that great producer of mystical images, and visions of the past—was conjuring pictures, with human forms in their center, so real, so familiar, that it would seem as if they must have heard his addresses when, at last, low words came slowly from his lips:

'America!—far, far land. Ah! I think I see it, beyond the vast waters—see it as I left it; like a thing of life, begging me not to go, and whispering of its smiles and joys, while my own conscience was prophesying this after-regret. Cherished friends; familiar scenes—how have I deserted you!—to accept the companionship of strangers, whose looks are chills, whose presence

brings no cheer. Wife!—child! Oh, that Pearl were here! Pearl!—sweet little Pearl! with your laughing eyes and winsome chatter; shall I ever see you again? No, no; I am dead!—dead! And for what? Why did I abandon that which would have made me happy? Weak, weak man that I am!—knowing of my sin, yet helpless. In the coils, pursuing a phantom; chasing a gem with wings, that eludes or evades me, ever luring, ever tantalizing—like a boy who will race after a butterfly, hither and thither, till the insect soars beyond his reach, and its would-be possessor falls to the earth, exhausted. Am I crazy? What is this infatuation but madness? One moment, she favors me with smiles—the next, she frowns at my presumption. And I am never nearer; she keeps me from her; while I still linger, like a dog, at her heels, or a slave who would die at her command. Estelle! Estelle! would that you were dead! Then, and only then, would this horrible spell which is upon me be broken—Who's there?'

A rap at the door had cut short his musings, and the servant of the house entered, bearing a note.

Bidding the girl retire, he broke the es- cutcheon seal.

Then his face paled, as he read the fol- lowing:

She had been thus ever since she bade adieu to the last departing visitor; with eyelids drooping and brilliant orbs dreamily lustrous behind the silken lash; and strange, strange meditations were training through her mind.

Presently there sounds a light footfall on the carpet. She roused with a start.

"Pearl—is it you?"

"Yes, mamma. I'm tired playing all by myself; and I have been alone, for Jessie said she must go see her sick mother."

A fairy it was who spoke; a child of not more than fourteen years, yet with a face that told of an intellect almost womanly, and beaming in all the sweetness of a soul of gold.

Over her smooth, white shoulder, that rose like a hill of tinted snow above the costly trimming of her low-cut bodice, there fell a misty profusion of flaxen hair; her features, like her form—with eyes of blue, brows of jet, lips of red, and teeth as pure as the glow she bore—all these, augmented by the glow of health, made up a picture of heavenly loveliness.

"I told Jessie she must not leave you," returned the woman to the child's last speech.

"Oh, mamma! but her mother was sick. You wouldn't want her to stay away, would you? And you won't be angry with her for it? Why, if you was sick, I'd come to you no matter what happened."

"Would you, Pearl?"

"Yes, I would."

The dark-eyed beauty drew Pearl toward her, and bent to kiss the pure forehead; though that kiss was cold and the action forced.

"But you must not stay here, Pearl. There may be visitors at any moment; and mamma would rather you did not see rude men, and hear how they talk. Go now."

"But it's so lonely all by myself!" interrupted the child.

"Here's a letter for Mrs. Rochestine," said a servant, who came in at that juncture, with a missive on a heavy salver. "It was got out of the post-office early this morning by the man you sent there."

While Pearl gazed silently into the face of the queenly woman she had called "mamma," the latter broke the fancy seal of the envelope, and tore it open.

"Why, mamma, how red your cheeks are!" exclaimed the girl.

"Are they, pet? Ha! ha!" a laugh that was unnatural, even in its music; "well, it's the heat of the room, and the excitement I have been through. Your cheeks would be red, too, if you had all to do that I have been doing this morning."

"Oh, how I wish I could try and see!" broke in Pearl, while a hopeful light came into her deep-blue eyes. "Don't you think I might help you entertain? I know I'm only a foolish little girl, mamma; but it's not so very hard to be good-humored, and maybe some one would not think it a hard task to talk with me."

"There, there, Pearl; go, go now, child. Hark! some one is coming. Don't you see I wish to be alone?" the last with a slight show of impatience.

Pearl glanced at her keenly for a second, then, with a little sigh, she turned away.

When Isabel Rochestine was alone, she opened the letter and read it. It was postmarked Baltimore, Dec. 31st.

The tinge on her cheeks mantled higher, as she perused the lines on the paper, and her full bosom heaved with a warmth occasioned by the words of the perfumed missive.

At last she placed it to her lips, kissing it passionately, and cried, half-aloud:

"He is coming! coming! will be here to-day! He may enter at any time! Claude! Claude! would that I were free! would that you knew how madly, madly I love you!" and again and again she pressed the letter to her lips, imprinting kisses on the name at the bottom of the sheet.

A tinkle of the door-bell checked her outburst, and she listened, holding her breath to the footfalls of the comer in the hall.

"It is he!—Claude!"

A tall, broad-shouldered man, handsome in figure, attractive in face, with bright, piercing hazel eyes, and curly hair of similar hue; white, even teeth glistening beneath a luxuriant mustache; elastic in movement, and with a bearing of command.

This was Claude Paine, the writer of the letter, who entered the saloon parlor, and stood before the woman who expected him.

But, her manner was altered. All traces of that eagerness and momentary excitement which, a second previous, had possessed her, now vanished. She was calm, smiling, courteous merely, as she extended a hand in greeting.

"Mr. Paine."

"Ah! Mrs. Rochestine—let me hope you are enjoying all the pleasures of the season? A happy New Year."

"And for you, I wish the same. Be seated."

"By the contents of your card-basket, I judge you have not been lonely to-day," he said, drawing up a chair.

"Oh, no!" laughing lightly. "To be candid—with you—I am almost tired of shaking hands, listening to compliments, and taxing my brains to entertain those few bores who seem to have nothing to say when they enter a lady's parlor. It is fortunate this occurs only once a year."

"Fortunate for your endurance, perhaps, Mrs. Rochestine; but—but—"

"Well? Another piece of flattery, I suppose? You are merciless as the rest."

"It is unfortunate for others that New Year's day does not come around more frequently."

"Why, pray?"

"Can you ask? Is it not a source of happiness to be near one whom we admire?" She arched her brows.

"Even though we must be content oftentimes with one-half of that admiration unspoken," he added; and continued, after a pause, during which his eyes seemed to read her inmost thoughts:

"Once under the influence of your society, Mrs. Rochestine, it is severe for a weak mortal to realize, that—"

"Your trip, Mr. Paine?" she interrupted.

"Had you a pleasant one?"

Her cheeks were dyed in blushes, and a strange, mesmeric sensation crept over her, as, by a mighty effort, she compelled her glance to meet his.

A peculiar expression flitted across his face; but it was gone instantly, when he replied to her question.

"Yes, a very pleasant trip, indeed—that is, in one sense."

"How?"

"And quite unpleasant in another."

He looked gravely at her, and she saw that he hesitated in communicating something.

"What is it, Mr. Paine?"

"I regret exceedingly that I should be the bearer—"

"No matter; tell me. What is it?"

"Bad news—very bad," he uttered, slowly, now gazing down, as if to avoid her anxious look.

"Tell me!" two low, breathless words, and the color began to recede from her face.

"Mrs. Rochestine, I beg of you receive, as calmly as possible, what I am about to say. Your husband—"

"My husband?" quickly.

"Is—"

"Mr. Paine, will you speak?"

"He is dead."

"Dead!" the words came spasmodically, and she gazed in doubt.

"Feeling that he had gotten over the greatest difficulty, he went on with more ease:—"

"Yes; by a letter from a friend of mine, which I received while in New York, I learn that Horace Rochestine died in London, some months ago, of fever. There was a paper inclosed, too, announcing his decease. You have my sincerest sympathy and condolence—ha! you are sick, Mrs. Rochestine! Permit me."

He hastily poured a glass full of wine, and proffered it to her; for she was pale, and swayed dizzily in her seat.

But, Isabel Rochestine forgot, for the moment, that he was present.

It was not alone this news of the death of her husband that worked upon her, as she stared, in a vacant way, at the carpet; other thoughts were consuming her mind—inevitably aroused by the unexpected intelligence. From paleness, her face changed back to its dye of crimson; her veins were heated, her bosom rose and fell with quick, short respirations; and from her lips issued a scarce audible whisper—one word:

"Free!"

It was not meant for other ears; but Claude Paine heard it, and a starting thrill passed over him as he drew a step nearer her chair, and fixed a deep, deep glance on the bowed head of this beautiful woman.

CHAPTER III.

A MEETING IN THE DARK.

NECESSARILY passing over the day, until we reach an hour after midnight, we turn to the long, low bridge that stretches over the Eastern Branch and leads to quiet Uniontown.

Near by the "draw," thickly muffled—not so much on account of cold, as to defy the searching damp which lurked, like a curseful malaria, on the bosom of the dark water—a man was pacing restlessly to and fro, at times staring his eyes in the direction of the north end of the bridge, and uttering impatient syllables.

"It is time he showed himself!" he exclaimed, at last, pausing and gazing steadfastly along the outline of the white railing.

"He is behind time; and I have waited till I can be patient no longer."

And then the head of the solitary personage hung forward, and he continued, in a musing strain:

"What if he should disappoint me? His letter told me to be punctual, and he is the tardy one. In Baltimore, yesterday, eh? Been to New York? I wonder what excuse he will make to Isabel Rochestine, for the unexplained absence and silence of her husband? And I wonder what the deuce is up—that he should be so anxious for me to secure a woman who is willing to go away with a child? It's just like Claude Paine—he always was a mystery to me. But it pays me to hold my tongue, do his bidding, and so retain his friendship; and I don't care beyond that. Ah! that's him, now."

A second figure was on the bridge; the rapid thud of heels told the comer was approaching hastily.

"Is that you, Paine?"

"Yes—Derrick?"

"Ay. What kept you?"

"Am I late?"

"Rather!"—dryly. "What's been the matter?"

"Not now; wait until we get to the rendezvous. Have you seen the negress?"

"Yes; and every thing is fixed."

"They were walking swiftly, arm in arm, toward the drug-store light, that shone like a brilliant beacon at the south end."

"All fixed, eh? She's willing to go—and do."

"Yes, for good pay."

"I'll attend to that portion, never fear."

When they were off the bridge they turned to the left, through Uniontown—passing the spectral Willow above the bakery shop, and taking a "short cut" across the lots, in the direction of the steep hills that rear at the back of the little burgh.

"Our precautions are none too soon," said Paine.

"What do you mean? Your letter was very mysterious."

"Ha! ha! Was it? Well, you shall be 'posted' directly. I have made better progress than I anticipated. But, I say, wait."

Striking a worm-like road which led up the steep descent, they continued briskly on with hardly a word. As they neared a house that surmounted one of the tree-bared eminences, the music of guitars and violins reached their ears, and they quickened their pace, lest some straggler, drawn thither by the sound, should discover and suspicion them.

"Hurry, Derrick."

"I'm hurrying all I can, along this treacherous place. I guess nobody's going to see us. But, I say, while other people are having fun, we'll plot, eh?" alluding to the merry company assembled in the house at their right.

Close to Fort Stanton stands a dilapidated frame building, with a crumbling porch half-way round it—a signal-office at one time, perhaps, but now, with the deserted fort, one of the lonely monuments of the recent Rebellion—a point of elevation where the distant city's lights could be seen gleaming and reflecting like the scintillations from a fairy realm.

This was, evidently, the place of rendezvous mentioned by Claude Paine; for, ascending the rickety steps at one side, the two men halted.

A third party awaited them here—a woman, who stepped forward as they came up.

"Here we are, Cassa," said the man named Derrick, in a low tone.

"An' here I is, too," returned the woman, briefly; and, by her thick, guttural voice, we discover her to be a negress.

"I've brought the gentleman who is to make the arrangement with you," he pursued.

"Who is de gentleman? What his name?"

"Mr. Claude Paine."

"Mr. Claude Paine," repeated the negress, quickly; and had it not been for the darkness we might have noticed a start, a strain of the eyes, as if to see the features of the one with whom she was about to make a bargain.

"Has Mr. Derrick told you what I want you to do?"

"Told me come; didn't say what you's goin' to give me, dough."

"If you take the child where it may never be seen by me again, I'll pay you two hundred dollars. And, besides, if you keep me informed of your whereabouts, I'll allow you sufficient funds, monthly, to live comfortably on. But, mind, there must be no half-way management about it. I will have to deceive the child, in order to get her away; and when she finds out the trick she may try to escape you. In that case, you will, perhaps, have to resort to pretty stern measures. Are you ready to act?"

"I is."

"Very well. Now, remember: I shall take the child to the depot, to-morrow afternoon; will be on hand in time for the 5:40 train. See that you are promptly there. Have you good clothes?"

"Nothin' but dese rags."

"Then here is money to begin with. Buy a decent outfit, and look respectable when you meet me. Strike a match, Derrick."

Derrick ignited a lucifer, and held it so that his companion could see to extract some money from his pocket-book.

Paine drew forth twenty dollars and reached it toward her.

But he paused, with hand outstretched, and eyes riveted on the face of the negress; and something in her black countenance, her peculiar poise, her strange glance—or all three combined—perplexed him.

The match sputtered itself out; the spell was broken.

"Here—take it. You may go now. Be sure that you do not disappoint me."

"Where is I to take de child?"

"Anywhere. The further off the better."

Mumbling some sort of promise to fulfill her part, Cassa, the negress, turned from her, descended the steps of rotten wood and rickety build, and presently vanished in the gloom.

"Derrick," said Paine, thoughtfully, when they were alone, "I've seen that woman before somewhere."

"The deuce you have? Impossible!—why, they all look alike to me. I guess you're mistaken."

"No, I'm not; I'm sure of it."

"Well, I don't suppose it makes much difference, if you have. Tell me about your visit to-day. You said, in your letter, that you'd call on Isabel Rochestine as soon as you got here."

"And so I did. Derrick—I can't get that woman out of my mind. Did she tell you where she lived?"

"Over in Howard Town. But, pshaw!—quit your nonsense. What of Horace Rochestine?"

"I heard from him."

"He's dead."

"Eh?—no?"

"Sh! not so loud. What's that?"

"There was a rustling of leaves and twigs, among the undergrowth, at one side of the little house, and Paine pointed toward the spot from whence came the sound."

"It's nothing. Perhaps a stray dog—yes, I told you so."

The shrill bark of a cur, not many yards off, broke the ominous silence which surrounded them; and Claude Paine, satisfied it was not the presence of an eavesdropper, which had startled him, resumed:

"Yes, Horace Rochestine is dead—dead to the world; at least, he said in his letter to me, that he wished me to circulate the rumor, as he would never again return to America."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Derrick, with a whistle.

"He enclosed his will, too."

Paine was still thoughtful in manner, as if his mind dwelt simultaneously on other things.

"Don't say so? Then he is still infatuated with the Englishwoman?"

"Yes. He says he must be considered dead by those who knew him in America; and means to begin life anew in London, under another name. But this will is the thing, Derrick."

"What about it?"

"We know that Horace Rochestine never did love Isabel, his present wife; that the marriage was made up between the two families, after the death of his first wife; hence, his easy yielding to the fascinating charms of a woman far more beautiful than Isabel."

"Yes; but what has that got to do with the will?"

"A great deal. He has not left Isabel one penny of his wealth."

"Every thing goes to the child of his first wife—every thing."

"That's Pearl?"

"Yes."

"And what do you propose? Are you going to prove as good a friend as he thinks you are?"

"Am I a fool, Derrick! Of course I love Isabel Rochestine—after my own way—but if she is not going to bring me anything in money, I would rather let her alone. She has very little of her own; since her father, when he died—the old ass!—left the bulk of his accumulations to charitable purposes."

"You will marry her, then?"

"Certainly I shall. When a man's will is made out, and he is believed to be dead, there can hardly be much harm in marrying his widow! That is why I wrote to you, to secure a woman who could serve me. I must get Pearl out of the way."

"That's it, eh? Well, now, I was wondering—"

"As I said, I have made wonderful progress. You and I will soon be sailing in smooth waters, Derrick, with plenty of money."

"And you won't 'shake' your old friend, now that you are getting along so fine?"

"Shake" you, Derrick! If I do, may I die for it!"

The two grasped hands, and then, after a few more words, started away from the spot, pursuing a different route this time to reach the main road.

As they skulked along by the fence, between the two houses on the hills, a party of ladies and gentlemen crossed their path; but, soon these were out of sight, and they again moved forward—ere long reaching the bridge, and crossing over into the city.

But, it was not a dog that had startled the plotters, when they stood on the porch of the deserted house. They were no sooner gone than a figure emerged from the bushes, and moved down the hill, by an opposite path.

It was Cassa, the negress.

(To be continued.)

Lightning Jo: The Terror of the Santa Fe Trail.

A TALE OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

AUTHOR OF "THE PHANTOM PRINCESS," "OLD RED HAZEL," "THE BOY TRAPPER," "OLD ORIZELY," "THE DEAR TAMER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LONELY CAMP-FIRE.

THE twinkling light of a camp-fire at such a time as this, and in such a place, was enough to make any one cautious, and Egbert Rodman approached it as stealthily as a Comanche would have done himself.

He was somewhat surprised when yet some distance away to observe that there was a single person sitting near it, in the attitude, either of deep meditation or of intense listening.

There must be others close at hand, or else he is not aware of the danger he runs," muttered the young man, as he continued his advance.

"Strange! but there is something about him that reminds me of Lightning Jo, and," he added, the next moment, "Lightning Jo it is; hello! old fellow, how come you here?"

And forgetful of all else for the time, except his delight in seeing the true and tried comrade, Egbert Rodman rushed forward to give him appropriate greetings.

He saw at once that something was the matter with the scout. He was sitting up on a large stone, with his rifle between his knees, and supporting his chin, was looking absent into the fire, like one whose thoughts were entirely removed from his present surroundings. He merely looked up at the spontaneous greeting of the young friend from whom he had become separated some time before, and staring at him for a moment, again lowered his gaze without saying a word or shifting his position.

But, if he was in a sullen, thoughtful mood, Egbert was not, nor did he intend to keep any prolonged silence in deference to such a whim. He believed he understood the scout well enough to know how to approach him, and in a cheery manner, free from any rude familiarity, he placed himself beside him, and touching his shoulder, said:

"Come, Jo, don't sit idle here. You seem to be depressed; but rally, and tell me what the matter is."

The scout seemed to appreciate the consideration shown him, and straightening up, he heaved a great sigh, looked fixedly at his young friend again, but still refused to speak. Egbert was determined to press the matter.

"What is it that troubles you, Jo? Come, out with it; what are you thinking about?"

"Little Lizzie Manning?" was the reply of the scout, in a voice that was sepulchral in its solemnity.

The scout of a Comanche's poisoned arrow, driven to the heart of Egbert Rodman, could not have startled him more than did this reply. He gave a gasp as if of pain, and almost fell to the earth, before he could compose himself sufficiently to sit down and collect his thoughts. When he did so, he looked across from the opposite side of the camp-fire, and asked, pleadingly:

"What about her, Jo? Is she living or dead? Can you tell me what has become of her? Don't keep me in suspense."

"You didn't seem in quite so much suspense a little while ago," he remarked, somewhat resentfully; and then, as if regretting the words, he hastened to add, in a more considerate voice:

"That's just the trouble, Roddy; you know when the fresh came, we had a time to look after each other, but we went spinning down the *kenyon* as if Old Nick was after us. I heard you yell, and of course you heard my answer, but there wasn't much to be seen then, and so we each kept on sailing on our own hook."

"But Lizzie! did you hear nothing of her?" inquired the breathless lover.

"Yes; I did hear her," replied Jo, with another sigh; "some time after that I heard her call out somebody's name."

"Whose was it?" asked Egbert, with a painful throb of his heart, and a staring, eager look that brought a wan smile to the face of Jo for the instant, but passing instantly as he made answer.

"As near as I could make out, it was yours. In course, you didn't hear it, but as I did, I called back to her, and she knew me on the instant. I axed her how she was fixed, and she said she was on the back of her horse, but had no idea where she was going, or how it was possible for her to get out of this scrape. You can understand that it wasn't very easy to gabble at such a time, with the roar of the *kenyon* in your ears. I told her to hang on to her horse, no matter where he went, and there was a chance of her getting through somehow. At the same time I didn't think there was much chance of any one ever coming out of that place alive. I could tell by the sound of the gal's voice that she wasn't very far away, and I worked as never a poor wretch worked before to get to her. I fired my horse out, and when we got down to that 'ere lake, or whatever you're a mind to call it, I struck out for myself. The minute I left the mustang, I sung out to her, but I didn't hear any answer. I yelled 'ag'in and 'ag'in, but it warn't no use, and I swum ashore and made up my mind—well, no—confound it!" added the scout, fretfully.

"I haven't made up my mind, either, that the little gal has been drowned, and we ain't never more to hear her sweet voice. That's what I've been feeling, and what I was thinking about when you come sneaking up so sly that you thought nobody could hear you."

"You think then that there is a possibility that she may have escaped, after all?"

"Well, there's the trouble," returned Lightning Jo, with something of his old familiar look. "When I set to thinking about it, I can't see any way under heaven by which she could have come out alive, and I s'posed I couldn't have seen any way how you folks were ever to get out of Dead Man's Gulch, if I could have known how things were there. It is mighty hard, and you feel it, too, if you thought half as much of that little gal as I do."

Poor Egbert was inexpressibly shocked at this remark, and looked reprovingly at the scout. He made no reply, and assumed a thoughtful attitude upon the other side of the small camp-fire; but just then the scout roused up.

TO-DAY.

BY JULIE.

His lips so often pressed to mine
Belong to me today.
Making life seem almost divine,
Too fair to pass away.

Oh! may they not to-morrow rove—
Sweet lips so loving now—
Fate grant they never so ruthlessly prove
And false to every vow.

Strong arms that gently me enfold
And draw me to his breast,
Make me forget this world is cold
As in their fold I rest!

Then to-morrow may no other win
From me his dear embrace,
The arms to-day I'm resting in,
And hiding my glad face!

"Diamonds or Hearts."

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

Frowns all over that pretty, carnation-tinted face; pout plainly visible on the cherry-red lips; and in the brightest of blue eyes discontent and a dash of anger.

She sat beside the window—this pretty, piqued girl, whose name was Narcisse Adeler—altogether regardless of the fresh June breezes that brought in such delicious odors from the sweet, blossoming orchards; altogether blind to the glory of that June sky, as deeply blue as her own blue eyes; indifferent to the wide, open landscape, that lay, in all its first burst of emerald loveliness, smiling under Sol's warm kiss.

Afar, just where the meadowland began to slope gently upward, was a large stone house, grim, gray and grand, where ivy ran over the iron casements of the diamond-paned windows; ivy planted there generations back, when pretty faces looked out upon the young, low vine.

Narcisse Adeler said that house above and among all that lay between and around. And it was the thought of that house, its inhabitants, and what was about to transpire, that made Narcisse's face so gloomy and cloudy.

"Well—what are you going to do about it?"

A flush surged over Narcisse's cheek as she answered:

"Stay at home, I suppose, as I generally am obliged to do."

Mrs. Adeler laughed and shrugged her shoulders as only a French woman could.

"Because you have not Florry's diamond parure to wear! Really, Narcisse, I think you can not care to go so very much."

Narcisse's eyes flashed.

"Not care to go! Aunt Alphonsine, you know I am dying to go. But how can I, with my one ball dress, no jewels, nothing, make myself fit for the grand reception at the St. Elmos?"

There was something very bitter in her tone as she answered.

"I am sure I can not help you any, my dear. If I was as rich as Florry, I might lend you my diamonds; as it is, the best I can do is to offer my condolences."

Mrs. Adeler laughed sunnily, but her cheerful aspect of affairs did not at all please Narcisse.

"Thank you! I shall doubtless find your loan useful. Oh! but I feel like screaming aloud for very vexation, when I look up at the St. Elmo mansion yonder"—and the slender finger pointed to the grand old stone house—"and remember I can not go where it has been my dream to go for weeks. Yes, ever since Edo St. Elmo came home from France I have thought of nothing else but this; and gradually her voice lowered as if in soliloquy.

And, truth to tell, Narcisse Adeler would not have wished her inmost thoughts known, even to her best friend.

Ambitious thoughts were—very, for a penniless orphan girl; for Narcisse had made up her mind that if youth, beauty and grace could carry the day, she could readily storm the castle of Edo St. Elmo's heart.

That was her ambition—to marry Edo St. Elmo, and Edo St. Elmo's money.

No wonder then that she was so vexed, when this, her first and so good an opportunity arrived for the commencement of her campaign, and she was so circumstanced that she could not take advantage of it.

True, as Aunt Alphonsine said, she could go, if she wanted to, minus any elaborate adornments, and in the white gauze dress that became her so remarkably well. But, what sort of an impression could she make on Edo St. Elmo, thus, especially when the beautiful young heiress, Florry Jordan, would be there?

And in her disappointment, and jealous anger, Narcisse never noticed that Mrs. Adeler had silently withdrawn, and that Florry Jordan was standing curiously watching her.

"Oh, Florry," and Narcisse suddenly started up, all impulse and excitement; "oh, Florry, won't you help me to prepare for the St. Elmo reception? I want a decent thing to wear, and I do so want to go! There's a dear, good cousin! I know you will help my smiling."

And in truth, Miss Jordan was smiling; her own sweet, cheerful smile, that generally preceded her gentle assents to the many requests voluble Narcisse did not hesitate to prefer.

"If I can assist you, I will, for I wish you would go. What is it now?"

"Florry, if I only might wear your—your diamonds and that black lace dress you never have worn yet! Oh, Florry, I never could repay you!"

Her cherry-red parted lips, and the eagerness in her eyes were very pretty to look at, and Miss Jordan laughed gayly.

"But I am afraid unless you were tormented with a few dollars, as I am, and expected to dress accordingly."

A light shadow flitted over Narcisse's expressive face; then, true to her nature, she burst forth again.

"But I am sure I would look stylish, Florry! I know black lace is becoming, and the diamonds of course would be. Please, please, just this once! I do so want Mr. St. Elmo to—"

Then she stopped, point blank, half-coolly, half-modestly, and Florry kissed the sweet, pleading lips.

"I never can withstand coaxing, Cissy! Suppose, besides loaning you the diamonds and the robes, I let you take my carriage, and, for once, imagine you are the wealthy young lady of the town? We are all strangers, comparatively, you know, and people scarcely know whether Miss Jordan or Miss Adeler is the heiress."

Narcisse listened, in speechless ecstasy.

"Florry! you darling, dear old Florry!"

"And she is the heiress we have all heard so much about? Well, St. Elmo, take care of your heart, for she's as pretty a little thing as ever you saw."

Edo St. Elmo glanced across the room at Narcisse Adeler. She was standing under the gasolier, laughing and chatting with Deane Hathaway, her jewels flashing and scintillating with every motion of her graceful figure. Her cheeks glowed like an oleander blossom, and her bright, clear blue eyes were sending out sparks of radiant light. She was beautiful, almost beyond comparison.

St. Elmo had been introduced, and he had danced the opening quadrille with her; then, with her heart all abuzz with the pleasure of the dance and brightest vistas of a future opening rosy-red to her keen imagination, Narcisse had listened to his courteous thanks, and covertly watched him across the long room to where he stood talking with Harry Silas.

Then St. Elmo wandered about among his lady guests, with a smile here, and a flash of merriment there; a deftly worded compliment now, and a gallant reception of congratulation then, until he had come to the piano, where, alone, and softly murmuring a *matinee* on the keys, was a dainty, haughty-headed girl, in a sweeping robe of plain amber silk, and a simple gold chain and cross about her neck.

She turned slightly as he approached; then, when a group of stately maidens came for a second from the roomful of guests, she raised her eyes fully to his.

"Heavens! Florry Jordan—can it be possible? Florry, Florry, darling!"

And Edo St. Elmo clasped her hands rapturously.

"Then I know we meet as we part, Edo?"

Her thin, lustrous eyes were smiling in his.

"Not as we part, Florry, dearest, for then I did not love the wealthy Miss Jordan so well as this plainer and, I hope, poorer, little Florry. Darling, now I am the rich one, and can give you what I would not take at your hands."

He whispered it as he gave her his arm, and they walked out on the veranda.

"I have searched everywhere for you, Florry," he said, later, "and in all the years since we parted I never saw but one face that made me swerve for an instant in my allegiance to you. It was Miss Adeler's, the girl I met to-night; you never saw a more perfect face, did you, darling?"

"She is very beautiful, Edo, but I am not jealous."

"You need not be, Florry. For the moment I heard she was an heiress—"

"Sh, that is she, with Hathaway coming toward us."

And as Narcisse passed, Florry detained her lover by a gentle pressure on his arm.

"Narcisse, dear," she said, aloud, "will you and Mr. Hathaway stop a moment? I wish to present to Miss Adeler my betrothed husband, Mr. St. Elmo. Edo, this is Narcisse, my cousin."

Of course Narcisse's keen disappointment did not kill her; and of course Mr. St. Elmo could not help laughing when he learned Florry was the heiress after all.

And so the question "Diamonds or Hearts?" was settled, for poor Narcisse at least.

Strangely Wed: OR, WHERE WAS ARTHUR CLARE?

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.
AUTHOR OF "ADRIA, THE ADOPTED," "CECIL'S DECEIT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.

JUSTINE RECEIVES A TOKEN.

THE Terrace had two suites of drawings-rooms. Above stairs the suite comprised two spacious rooms, separated only by an arch, and fitted in blue and gold. The carpet was white velvet, with blue forget-me-nots sprinkled over it. The furniture was rosewood, cushioned with blue satin, embroidered with gold.

A low, clear fire was burning in the burnished grate. Justine looked in, but the rooms were quite empty, and she went on her way to the suite below.

The room she entered was the same where Lambert had imparted the knowledge he possessed to Mr. Granville. It was square, and separated from another apartment precisely similar in appearance and garnishing by folding-doors of heavy, stained oak. The low mantels were of black, veined marble; the chairs and couches were of carved oak, cushioned with ruby velvet, and the hangings were of ruby silk, looped with twisted gold cables.

In a range, with these apartments, but separated from them by a narrow passage, were the library and study. The folding-doors were slightly ajar, but not sufficiently so to admit a complete view of the inner room.

The front drawing-room had one occupant. Lambert stood before the fire, as much at his ease as though he were master there instead of guest.

Justine gave a slight start. It was now two days since he had unceremoniously left The Terrace, and she had not been apprised of his return.

"I fear you are a victim of mistaken habits," she said, giving him a sweeping courtesy as he advanced.

"But not of unsteady purpose," he returned, meaningly.

"Do you make it an object, then, to take people unawares?"

"I have an object, and it is to take you, my little beauty; but I have given you fair warning of my intention."

"Which I have every confidence in my ability to frustrate if a flat negative can not be made apparent to your comprehension," declared Justine, defiantly. "If you make me take up the gauntlet against you in open warfare, let there be no quarter given on either side."

"You will cry for mercy after the first round," laughed Lambert.

"Not I."

"We shall see. Do you know I have determined that you shall be my wife within a week, my little wild bird?"

His cool insolence was exasperating in the extreme. Justine's fiery nature was up in arms at his provoking self-confidence.

"Miss Clare, if you please," she asserted, with a stamp of her little foot. "I object to intimacies which are both disagreeable and unwarranted by any code of social law."

"As you like," returned Lambert, indiffer-

ently. "But civil law will recognize my claim within the space I have assigned."

"How do you propose carrying on your siege?" asked Justine, ironically. "The dark ages have passed away when a girl could be forced into marrying against her will."

"Unfortunately, or otherwise, dark secrets were not confined alone to past ages. I have one which you shall share with me."

"Not if my protest will spare me. I've no desire to share so much as a passing confidence with you, Mr. Percy Lambert."

"Oh, but this secret belongs most properly to you. If I were tender-hearted I might regret making the initial thrust; not being so, I am glad to hold powerful weapons in my hands."

"You are destined to be the victim of a terrible malady, Justine Clare. Insanity is inherent in your family; and unless you consent to marry me at the time I specify, I will find means to torture you until you are raving mad."

There was something so diabolical in the assertion which he so coolly made, that Justine involuntarily quailed.

"You can not comprehend the full extent of the calamity at once," continued Lambert, in his even, unexcited tones. "Lunatic asylums are only rather unpleasant institutions, by no means desirable as a personal abode, in your estimation now. Still, you can imagine something of the horror of a life in one, surrounded only by screaming maniacs, hedged in by secure walls, and catching your only glimpse of the out-door world through grated panes. I have just ascertained that the room which your father occupied in an institution of this kind for several years has for quite a time been vacant. It would be a coincidence if his daughter should drag out the best part of her life there."

Justine could only look at him, horror stamped upon her countenance, incredulity struggling against the fear that there might be truth in his words.

"How dare you repeat such a fabrication?" she cried, angrily, when she could speak. "I have no faith in you, and I will not believe that there is any shadow of truth in what you have told me. I can not remember my father, but I know that he died abroad when I was a little child, and during all his life he was with the Granvilles. How dare you stoop to such paltry deceit, hoping to frighten me into compliance with your will. You have only earned my contempt by it."

A half-exultant smile hovered upon his lips as he looked down in her excited face.

"I have asserted nothing which I can not prove," he said. "For every good reason it was deemed better to spread the report of your father's death, rather than make known the fact of his helpless lunacy. I can prove the fact of his incarceration in an insane asylum for five years after his supposed decease. It will not be a waste of time to defy me."

Justine shrank away from him in shuddering terror.

"Is it 'no quarter' still?" he asked, mockingly.

"Yes!" cried Justine, all her native audacity springing to her aid. "All the more so if you have spoken truth! I shall appeal to my guardian for protection from your importunities. I have no fear of your driving me mad, but I shall not subject myself to annoyance from you."

"Mr. Granville will not attempt to thwart my will," returned Lambert, quietly. "He is too completely in my power to become my enemy."

"Then I defy you of my own strength," Justine exclaimed, in desperate earnestness. "Let me tell you first, it is impossible that I shall ever marry; and next, were it otherwise, all the forces you could bring to bear upon the earth would not bend me to your will."

With her face flushed and eyes flashing determined light, she rushed past him through the adjoining room, across the narrow passage into the library and on to the study door. It was locked, but she bent upon it impatiently with both her hands and called aloud for admission.

After a delay of some minutes, interminable to Justine in her state of wrought excitement, the door was opened and she was admitted into Mr. Granville's presence.

Unknown to both, he had been a witness to the interview between herself and Lambert. He had gone into the back drawing-room on some trivial errand as Justine had entered the other apartment, and had listened with a purpose, though unprepared for Lambert's statement.

He heard the latter's declaration that the report of Arthur Clare's death was a false one, and that he had afterward become the inmate of a lunatic asylum.

The listener grew pale and a cold chill ran through his frame. He grew faint, his knees trembled, and when he went back to the study his feet obeyed his will painfully as though they had suddenly become dead weights.

He looked the door and dropped into a chair, passing his hand over his forehead. It was clammy, and his lips were stiff and blue.

"What has the man discovered in these last two days?" he asked himself. "Better for him that he had never put himself upon the track!"

It was scarcely a moment until Justine was at the door impatiently demanding admission. Mr. Granville rose and walked the floor once or twice with hurried steps.

A portrait hung over the mantel-piece—a fair-faced, gentle-eyed woman so much like Sylvie that it only needed a glance to know it must represent her mother. He paused before it, sighed heavily, and then turning opened the door with a quiet hand.

Justine was too much agitated to observe any thing unusual in his demeanor. She clasped her hand over her heart to still its wild beats.

"Is it true that my father was a maniac?" she demanded, imperatively. "Is it true that insanity has been hereditary in his family?"

"My child, what is this?" asked her grandfather, quietly. "Calm yourself, and tell me what has disturbed you so."

"I wanted time to collect his thoughts. Justine excitedly related the substance of her interview with Lambert, all of which he already knew; but he was loud in his expressions of indignation and surprise.

"He has tried this means to force you to submission," he said, when she had concluded. "His statement is not without foundation, but there is nothing in the truth which need cause you alarm."

"Your father's mind was unsettled for some time before his death, and once I was induced to place him in an asylum hoping to effect his recovery. But his physical

health failed and I removed him from treatment, thinking it needless to subject him to such discipline after it was ascertained that he could not survive many months."

"You see how Lambert has exaggerated the circumstance in order that he may work upon your fears. Do not let the fact trouble you, for insanity is not a hereditary curse, as he asserted, but was super-induced in your father's case by long-continued ill-health and morbid tendencies."

Justine drew a breath of ineffable relief.

"You have taken a load from my mind," she said, gratefully. "Oh, it was horrible to contemplate such a possibility for my future. How I despise the dastardly nature which stoops to employ such vile deceit! Certainly you will not tolerate his presence here, knowing this?"

Mr. Granville was silent for a moment.

"I will be frank with you, Justine," he said, slowly. "Lambert has a claim upon me which I can not safely ignore. When he proposed for your hand—urging this hold to obtain my consent—I yielded, not knowing him for the despicable villain your relation proves him."

"I would not subject you to his persecutions, but it will be impossible to exclude him from the house."

"I can only see one mode of relief for you. I will send you to some quiet place where he can not readily trace you, until I find some means of satisfying his demand upon me and ridding myself of him utterly."

"Order the carriage, and let it be understood by the household that you are going to Bayfield for a day or two. Leave the rest to me, and I will see that Lambert does not find you."

"But—shall I not tell Sylvie?" asked Justine.

"No; you would only cause her anxiety. Can you be ready in an hour?"

"Yes, easily."

Justine tripped away to prepare for her unexpected journey, and Mr. Granville turned to pace the room with a gloomy, disturbed face.

In an hour Justine was driven away from The Terrace. She observed as she entered the carriage that Mr. Granville's own man, Simpson, was on the box; not the coachman, Mace. She smiled at the apparently unnecessary precaution, knowing the perfect trustworthiness of Mace.

It was a close carriage, and Justine soon grew restless as its solitary occupant. She opened the window and threw back her veil, though the air was sharp and keen. They were passing over the strip of road bordered on one side by the deep forest.

Justine caught sight of a bent figure crouched in a tattered scarlet cloak, with matted cllocks streaming beneath the hood. She pulled the check-string with a sharp jerk, and the carriage came to a sudden stand-still by the woman's side. The man on the box looked over his shoulder and growled impatiently to himself, but he had received his instructions from his master and felt bound to obey.

"Is it you, my good Dame Witch?" cried Justine, gayly. "Come, you shall be my traveling companion so far as your way lies. I don't believe your magic powers can conjure a conveyance so comfortable as this. Try it, and see how plush cushions compare with bare broomsticks."

"My way is not yet way," returned the old woman, shortly. "Go yer course and bide yer time; there's dark days ahead, I tell ye."

"Always croaking," exclaimed Justine. "Why can't you stave the gloom with a little sunshine, for variety's sake?"

Her words were answered by a quick motion of the old woman's hand. "Noo!" ferret eyes had been fixed, not upon the girl's bright face, but on the surly fellow on the driver's seat. When his head was turned away she thrust a wisp of soft paper in at the open window, and hobbled away, muttering and gesticulating as she went.

The carriage rolled on its way, and Justine smoothed out the bit of rustling gray tissue paper with curious fingers. A severed tress of glossy dark hair fell from its folds.

She caught it up and raised passionate kisses on the little severed curl. She recognized it as a silent yet assuring messenger from the husband to whom she yielded such strange allegiance.

A STARTLING EVENT AT THE TERRACE.

Two men faced each other in the study at The Terrace, engaged in a bitter altercation.

Lambert learned of Justine's departure from the house, and surmised that she had gone with the purpose of avoiding him. He went at once to Mr. Granville and demanded to know her whereabouts, but to his amazement the latter declined to give him any information.

"Are you going mad?" Lambert exclaimed, angrily. "You will not find it child's play to go against me now. I have the game in my own hands. I could beggar you, Austin Granville; brand you with infamy, and perhaps consign you to a felon's cell for life."

"Imprisonment and hard labor for life! It would be a glorious end to my diplomatic career; would it not?"

"Threats are easily uttered, harder to execute," retorted Mr. Granville.

"Are you a fool that you can not see how hopelessly you are in my clutches? But, I forget that you may not realize the entire extent of the knowledge I hold. I made an important addition to my former fund—by the merest chance—during my short absence from here."

"I know that you incarcerated Arthur Clare in a lunatic asylum for full five years after you promulgated the report of his death."

"You know, Austin Granville, that he was perfectly sane, unless you drove him mad at last by the treatment you ordered him to undergo."

"You know that instead of dying as you hoped he would under their discipline, he unaccountably gained strength and health."

"After the lapse of five years you were apprised that, if not entirely rational, he was not sufficiently the victim of mental hallucination to justify his further confinement in the asylum."

"You caused him to be removed, and persuaded one of the under-keepers to give up his place in the asylum, to take private charge of him."

"The man went back to the institution after a few weeks, telling the people there that Arthur Clare had taken his own life in a fit of frenzy which was the recurrence of his malady in an aggravated form. He expressed his opinion that Clare's dismissal

had been premature, and that medical treatment he had received for some slight disorder had been the immediate cause of re-awakening insane violence."

"This keeper was a favorite; he had a quiet, insinuating manner; a tread soft as a cat's; a faculty of ferreting out any underhand mischief which might be brewing, and any amount of muscle under a pale, puny exterior, to force obedience from refractory patients."

"His old official employers offered him his former position, but he declined it, and soon after disappeared from their view."

"I have been amusing myself by elaborating a theory from the facts I have presented."

"It would be a tragic sequel to the tale, would it not, if it should be proved that Arthur Clare was murdered; that the under-keeper was bribed to commit the foul deed, or to be accessory to it, and that his hire enabled him to retire from his vocation, while his inclination and prudence most probably induced him to choose a different climate for his abode?"

"The matter will be an interesting one to work up, I think. I give you another day to resign Justine, unreservedly, into my hands; if at the end of that time you defy me, my first act shall be to make known the existence of Arthur Clare's will. My second, to establish the fact of his sanity, and then to drag forth every incident connected with his imprisonment, subsequent removal, and mysterious decease."

"Do you doubt now that I have the power to master you? I will be a very blood-hound on your track, but that I will drag you down to the lowest depths of despair and humiliation."

Mr. Granville uttered a short, sarcastic laugh.

"My dear fellow, you are exciting yourself most unnecessarily. A little cool reflection will assure you what a wild course it is you are proposing. I warned you that Justine would prove unmanageable, and advised you to have patience; you took your own method and you see the result. You must perforce abide by it."

"Our understanding was that you should throw your influence into my cause. Instead of doing so, you encourage her first resistance and help her to elude me."

"Remember, if you refuse my terms it will be war to the teeth between us. If Justine is not delivered up to me, or if you have not given me accurate information of her whereabouts within twenty-four hours of this time, you will know what to expect."

"By this time to-morrow—very well," said Mr. Granville, and the conversation ended there.

"He takes it too quietly," Lambert said, to himself, thoughtfully. "The man has no conscientious scruples, and he seems equally dead to all fear of consequences. Can he hope to beat down the evidence I can bring against him, I wonder?"

It was late evening, and a lowering sky threatened inclement weather ere long. Notwithstanding, Mr. Granville ordered his horse and rode away through the falling darkness quite unattended.

His excuses were carried back to his guest through the medium of a servant, and Lambert found himself, thrown upon his own resources to while away the time, Sylvia having kept her room for a few days past from a slight indisposition.

When the following day wore toward its close without bringing the return of his host, Lambert regained the feeling of security which had been disturbed by the other's impetuous manner.

"He has thought better of it," he soliloquized, "and is bringing the willful little minx back again. Either her spirit or my will must break by and by, and I don't fear that I shall give ground; but I expect to find all the excitement I wish in taming her."

About two miles from The Terrace was a rambling, comfortable old inn, whose sign creaking without designated as The Happy Rest.

It was nearing the close of the day when Mr. Granville rode into the inn yard, and giving his horse in charge of the hostler, ordered it fed and rubbed down to be ready for his service again late in the evening.

A chilly rain had been falling during the earlier portion of the day, but now the wind had shifted to the north-west, and the rain had changed to a cutting sleet that tinkled against the inn windows, and drove in at the crevices, causing the ruddy heat of the roaring wood fires within to shine in tempting contrast to the wild aspect without.

Mr. Granville stood within the open porch as the man led away the tired animal he had ridden. While he remained there another man came into the porch, stamping to remove the crust of sleet from his boots.

The new-comer was wrapped in a large traveling-cloak, the cape of which was muffled close about his throat, but this too presented a shining surface of the clinging sleet.

Just within the doorway was a lobby with immense standing racks laden with the roughest outdoor paraphernalia of the assembled inmates.

The stranger threw his cloak over one of these racks, and went on through a dark hall in at an open doorway through which the dancing firelight threw a changeful glow.

Mr. Granville was left quite alone.

A couple of minutes later a half-grown lad, an attaché of the place, from very habit loitered through the outer entrance into the open porch. A man, wrapped in a large cloak, with his face muffled from the driving storm, was just ascending the steps.

"Here, my lad!" he called to the boy.

giving no attention to those about him, was the stranger who had last entered.

Mr. Granville cast one glance toward him and twitching his hat lower over his face, passed through to the clerk's room, where he found mine host. The latter came forward smiling and bowing, well pleased. It was not often that the wealthy land-owner favored The Happy Rest with his presence.

"A warm supper in a private corner, Mr. Granville—any thing you can serve up soon."

"Beefsteak, roast fowl, ham, sir?" rapidly enumerated mine host. "And to see you, sir, tea or coffee—chocolate if you like. Am proud of the honor, I assure you, sir. Potatoes, mashed or boiled, squash, eggs, vegetables, any thing you are pleased to order, sir."

"Hot coffee and a beefsteak, then," said Mr. Granville. "A new patron, eh?"

"Really, sir, I can't say as yet. The gentleman's orders were a bed and a private parlor in a quiet part of the house, which are being got ready for him now. Any thing more, sir?"

"Nothing more! I will wait here. Ah, yes; see that my horse is ready for me in a couple of hours."

The fussy landlord bustled out, and Mr. Granville flung back his great coat of white Astrachan-cloth trimmed with fur. There was not another one like it in the neighborhood, and any one of the idlers who had seen him could testify at least to this article of his dress, should he ever have need to call upon them.

He sunk into a chair with a strange, triumphant expression flitting across his face. "Assuredly, the fates are favoring me," he said to himself, in a half-whisper.

"That man whose cloak I borrowed for a moment is no one else than Gerald Fonteney."

The boy, scudding away over the frozen road toward The Terrace, made good progress, and in half an hour delivered the letter at the door.

Lambert was in his room and the missive was sent up to him. He tore open the envelope, expecting a message from Mr. Granville.

A tiny shining key dropped from the inclosed strip and struck with a sharp ring upon the hearth. He secured it, and looked for an explanation of its presence. The paper contained only a line, evidently written in a disguised hand.

"To be used when occasion requires!"

He twisted it about his finger and was about to fling it into the grate, but upon second thought, snatched it out again, placing it on the low mantel-piece.

At the same moment there came a sharp ring at the entrance bell. This time it was an express messenger with a small steel-bound box for Mr. Lambert.

Mace, who answered the door, carried it up to him.

"The occasion has not been long in coming," soliloquized Lambert, when the man had retired. "If I am not mistaken, this little key unlocks the mystery contained in the box yonder. I wonder what concession it brings?"

He fitted the key into the lock, and turned it.

There was a puff of white smoke, and an explosion which resounded through the house. The box, one of those devilish contrivances known most properly as "infernal machines," had burst into a thousand fragments.

CHAPTER X

THE RESULTS OF THE TRAGEDY.

SYLVIE had kept her room through an indisposition which was more of mind than of body, though she was by nature delicate and any mental disturbance was apt to wear upon her physical endurance.

Justine's absence deprived her of the healthy companionship which would have proved a tonic to her morbid inclinations.

She had endeavored to drown out the depressing influence represented by the unpleasant aspect without, by having a cheerful, blazing fire built in the wide low grate, and lowering the swinging chandelier, with its brilliant lights softened by tinted shades of ground glass.

The room was well suited to its occupant. The carpet was white, starred with blue anemones, and a velvet rug before the fire was a brilliant and never-fading bouquet of blended colors. The hangings were azure satin lined with white. An exquisite little table, inlaid with white and blue in mosaic pattern, was drawn to the center of the floor, and Sylvie reclined on a couch by its side.

She had been reading, but the volume had dropped from her hand to the floor. She wore a flowing wrapper of fine white merino embroidered with azure in a rich, heavy pattern, and her feet were incased in white satin slippers, just showing beneath the deep fringe of the striped soft zephyr afghan she had drawn partially over her.

Her reverie had lost itself in semi-unconsciousness, when the report of that terrible explosion rang through the house.

She started to her feet and rushed out into the gallery which led by a flight of wide steps into the hall beneath. The report had come from an opposite wing of the building, where she knew that the only occupied room was that which had been devoted to Lambert's use.

She fairly flew over the intervening space and burst in at the door, before any of the frightened servants of the house had thought of searching out the cause of the explosion.

There was a suffocating odor of gunpowder in the room. A table and a chair were overturned; the light was extinguished, but by the glow of the grate Sylvie could see Lambert's figure stretched darkly on the floor.

She flew toward him; then, obeying some impulse of common reasoning, turned and caught the bell-rope, knotted just within her reach. At that long, loud peal, every servant in the house started from the inertia with which they had been regarding each other, clustered in the warm cook-room, where the steaming dinner dishes were in readiness to be served.

They found Sylvie kneeling upon the floor, Lambert's head pillowed in her arms, her white wrapper stained with the warm crimson blood which oozed from a dozen wounds.

She was a timid, gentle creature—one of those women who seem born for tender nursing and a happy life. But the sight of the servants running hither and thither aimlessly called up in her the self-possession and forethought demanded by the emergency.

Lambert was raised and placed upon a couch, and Mace sent in all haste for medical assistance.

With her own hands Sylvie washed the blood from Lambert's face, and the housekeeper stripped him and bound his wounds where she could check the profuse bleeding.

They could do nothing more. He lay limp and lifeless but for that silent ooze of blood from all those ghastly wounds.

Sylvie sat with her face buried in the pillow beside him, her bright hair, dabbled in his blood. It seemed to her ages ago since the shock of seeing him stretched senseless and bleeding upon the floor had first come to her, and yet no one came to give him aid.

She put out her hand and touched the bandages saturated with that crimson flood. A shudder convulsed her frame, knowing as she did that the silent ebb was every moment lessening the chance of life which might remain to him.

All the servants had been excluded from the room except the housekeeper, Crowton. Sylvie lifted her blanched face, to look at the red stain upon her hand.

"Can not we do something for him?" she whispered. "Oh, will no one come until there is no hope?"

"I've done all I know, and the doctor'll be here soon," returned Crowton. "He's bleeding less, I think. Hark! some one is coming. Can it be Mace already?"

Already! Sylvie had experienced a lifetime agony in the last half-hour.

It was Mr. Granville. Some one had heard horse's hoofs thundering down the hard road leading past the inn, and hurried out to see Mace ride by at a mad pace. This some one had gathered from the few words the man shouted as he passed that a terrible accident had occurred at The Terrace.

The rumor was not long in reaching Mr. Granville's ear. He immediately ordered his horse and made his way at his best speed homeward.

He would have sent Sylvie away, but she steadily refused to leave Lambert's side, until the doctor came and insisted that she should do so, while he made a thorough examination of the wounded man's condition.

Mace had followed into the room, and was gathering fragments of burnished wood and steel from the floor.

"It's been one of them infernal machines," he said, shudderingly. "Heaven's curse on the man who sent it!"

Mr. Granville, turning, ordered him sharply from the room; but Sylvie had heard the man, and her white lips parted to breathe an amen to his words.

She went back to her chamber, where nothing was changed, yet to her—wrung to the heart with agonized suspense—the place seemed desolate as a tomb.

Her father came to the door presently, and was startled to see the strained pallor of her face.

"Sylvie, my child, you must overcome your fright from this shock. It was a terrible thing, happening here; but you must not let it affect you so."

"Is he alive?" she whispered.

"Yes, just living."

"Will you watch with him to-night?" she asked.

"The doctor will return at midnight. Until then Crowton will remain with him. She is faithful, if not efficient, and there is nothing to do except to wait. Where are you going, Sylvie?"

She had thrown a large broche shawl about her form, and came to his side as he stood in the doorway.

"To be with him, father! I think I should die if I staid here alone."

A suspicion crept into his brain for the first time, and he made no attempt to dissuade her from her purpose.

"If she cares for him so," he said to himself, "it is better as it is. It would have killed her had he married Justine."

The night passed and the day followed it, and still Lambert lived. The doctor had not first expressed any hope of his recovery. Now he called Mr. Granville aside.

"The man may live," said the doctor. "With careful attendance I may venture to say that he will. But it would be a mercy if he died, instead."

"Explain yourself," said Mr. Granville. "He will live, if it can be called living where the mind is dead."

"Let me illustrate to you how the calamity must have occurred, and you will understand how inevitable is the consequence."

"Suppose this to be the box." He placed a book on a little table near him. "He stooped over so as he turned the key. It exploded, the bulk of it shooting upward as you may see by these cracks in the ceiling; and taking him across the top of the head, literally tearing loose his scalp. His face and breast are torn with the slugs with which the thing was loaded, but not one penetrated to a vital point. All the danger lies in the wound on the top of his head. I thought first that his skull was crushed in beyond hope of life, but the injury to the bone is less than I had anticipated. His brain is paralyzed, though, and he must exist in hopeless idiocy. It's a pitiable case in a young man like him."

"Pitiable, indeed," returned Mr. Granville. "Fortunate, though, that he has no near relatives to be distressed by such an affliction."

The doctor was a keen-eyed man, and he shook his head gravely with the thought which came into his mind. He had penetrated Sylvie's interest in the injured man, and thought that the owner of The Terrace might be more nearly affected by the result than he could now anticipate.

"Is there no clue to the source from which the box came?" he asked.

"I think I have found a clue," replied Mr. Granville. "At all events, I have acted on it."

This was the course he had taken. Questioning the servants had elicited the facts regarding the delivery of the letter by the errand-boy from The Happy Rest, and the subsequent arrival of the box. The slip of paper, with its single written line, was found upon the mantelpiece, and dented upon it could be traced the impression of a tiny key.

Mr. Granville had the boy quietly summoned to his presence, and questioned him closely.

The lad asserted that the missive had been entrusted to him by a strange gentleman, who had paid him for carrying it to The Terrace.

He had not seen the gentleman's face and so could not swear to his identity; but he was tall, and was closely muffled in a large traveling cloak. The same cloak the boy had since seen upon a rack in the lobby at The Happy Rest.

Mr. Granville had no intention of acting without due apparent sifting of facts and deliberation upon them.

During the day he rode over to the inn

and held a private interview with the landlord. The cloak which the boy pointed out belonged to the strange guest who had come on the previous day, and who had registered as F. Gerald.

"Which my daughter," said mine host, who was of a garrulous turn, "thinks as he's a-travelin' incoo, as his sleeve-buttons which he left on his table this morning when she was a-cleaning of his room were marked G. F. instead of F. G. Queer-looking buttons as I noticed myself, sir! Made double for wearing either side; one gold with raised initials, the other set with a bluish stone with tiny white ones around it. Ponds, my daughter Nannette thinks, which I as an not a judge do not purtend to say."

After which mine host would have entered into a detailed account of the guest's wearing apparel as minutely observed by Nannette, who was firmly of the opinion that the gentleman was some established celebrity traveling incognito to escape the importunities of the people, and the honors they would confer upon him in his proper person. But Nannette was always on the look-out for celebrities incoo, and was given to romance-weaving from very slender threads.

Mr. Granville cut short the relation with some pertinent questions regarding the demeanor of the strange guest, and the manner in which he had occupied his time.

He appeared a born gentleman, mine host averred. Held every one at a distance and minded his own concerns. He had gone out during the previous evening and did not return until late, but had kept within doors and taken his meals in his room during the day.

Clearly, mine host could give no information bearing upon the point which Mr. Granville was striving to reach; but the latter thought he could work safely upon the material already in his hands.

Leaving the inn he rode directly to Centretown, the county seat, seeking an interview with the magistrate resident there. He made a statement of the facts in his possession, procured the services of two county officials and a warrant for the arrest of the man at The Happy Rest who had registered as F. Gerald.

The warrant was served before evening, and not being admitted to bail, the man who claimed possession of the traveling-cloak was committed to jail, and lay there awaiting his trial.

Lambert lay in a most critical condition. The doctor spoke hopefully of his restoration to physical strength, but adhered to the belief that his mind was utterly destroyed.

The court was in session during the following week, but in view of the still questionable results of the injuries Lambert had received, the case of the Commonwealth vs. F. Gerald was postponed until the next quarterly term, and the prisoner was remanded to a cell in the county jail.

"Out of my way for three months," said Mr. Granville, in one of his self-communings, "and by that time I will no longer fear his baffling me."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 122.)

ROYAL KEENE,

THE California Detective: The Witches of New York.

A ROMANCE OF FOUR GIRLS' LIVES.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "OVERLAND KIT," "WOLF DEMON," "ACE OF SPADES," "RED MAZEPPE," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE SCENT.

ABOUT four hours after the interview between the detective and the old savant, a hackman, sitting on the box of his coach in Union Square, was accosted by a keen-eyed stranger.

"Did you drive a party from the Academy of Music to a house down in Water street?" the stranger asked, who was no other than the California detective, Bright.

"Well"—and the coachman shut one eye and surveyed the stranger carefully—"I don't exactly remember whether I did or not."

"Would a five-dollar bill help your memory any?" asked the detective, quietly, drawing a "greenback" from his pocket and displaying it in his open palm.

The coachman grinned.

"Now you're talkin', Cap," he said, emphatically. "Wot do you want to know?"

"You drove the party to the place in Water street; then they all got out and entered the house. After a little while the woman came out, said something to you, got into the carriage, and you drove off."

"Correct; you've got it down fine, now," said the driver, in admiration.

Now, I want to know what the woman said to you and where you drove her to."

"What's the lay, anyway?"

"Five dollars for you if you give me the information; that's your 'lay'—what mine is, is my own business and nobody else's."

"Well, you're jes' as sharp as a meat-ax; don't play many points on you, you kin jes' bet! I'm your man fur to take in that V."

The driver said: "The woman told me that I needn't wait fur the rest of the party, but that I could drive her to the corner of Twenty-third street and Broadway, which I did, and she got out an' 'lit' out down Twenty-third street toward Fifth avenue. Got the worth of your five dollars, boss?"

"Hardly, but a bargain's a bargain; here's the money," and the detective handed the bill to the driver and sauntered off carelessly up the street.

"He's a cool hand, whoever he is," the hackman said, as he pocketed the bill.

"Not much information gained there," the detective said to himself, as he walked slowly onward. "The woman evidently designed to throw any one off her track. I am at fault; I must find out where the gal went to if you'll show me down with the stamps," the boy said, and he winked one eye in a very significant manner.

"Luck turns up a trump-card, by Jove!" the detective cried to himself, in glee. "All right, my little man; I guess you and I can make a trade."

"You bet we kin!" cried the youth, confidently.

"How did you happen to know any thing about this affair?" Bright asked.

"Well, I hangs out round John Allen's, in Water street, I does; them's my stumps in 'grounds at night. I was a-snoozin' down in a coal-box when the carriage driv' up, an' coaches ain't common down in Water street, boss; so I jist watched how the old thing worked. I seed 'em go into the crib, then I seed 'em gal come out and heerd her speak to the cove wot driv' the hack. An' when I heerd her speak I knew who she was."

"You did?" cried the detective, in glee; he was paying very strict attention to the newsboy's story.

"Yes, I seed 'em act at the the-a-ter. I used fur to go inter the gallery; it was jes' bully, now, I tell yer."

"She is an actress, then?"

"That's so—I seed 'em; don't fool this child much, now, you bet!" cried the boy, with a sagacious wink.

"You kept your eyes upon her, then?"

"Well, I jes' did, now. I thought somethin' was up, so when the masheen driv' off, I jumped up ahind. The gal went down Twenty-third street, an' I follered her till she went home."

"You know where she lives?"

"Oh, no, of course not; it's the man around the corner."

"That's jist what I want to know."

"I jes' understood the boy."

"I say, sport, it takes stamps to buy whisky," the boy said, with an air of wisdom.

"How much?"

"How's a dollar for high?" inquired the youth.

"I chip 'in."

"I 'call' you, sport," and the boy extended his hand; it was evident from his speech that he was no stranger to the beauties of the mystic game known as poker.

The detective placed a dollar in the hand of the boy, and he quickly conveyed it to his pocket.

"Do you want fur to know her name?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Miss Coralie York."

"And where does she live?"

"I kin show you, but I can't tell you."

"Go ahead, then."

"It's up-town," and the boy led the way up the street. "Say, wasn't it lucky, boss, I seed you last night down in the saloon?"

"Did you see me there?" the detective asked, in wonder.

"Course I did; that's the reason why I hung round when you was a-talkin' to the hackman. I thought maybe that you might want fur to know somethin' 'bout it."

Up the street till they reached Twenty-second; then they turned into that street, and went on till the boy at last halted before a modest two-story brick house.

"This is the crib," he said, confidently. "You are sure that you haven't made any mistake?"

"Nary mistake," replied the boy, promptly. "Say, sport, if you ever want, any job like this done, jes' you come to me. Billy Bat's my name; any of the rounders down in Water street knows me. I'm the boy with the Auburn hair, I am!" And then the boy danced off down the street.

"Shall I make a bold dash for 'em?" mused the detective. "I am almost certain that she took the bill from the old man when she bent over him before she called Van Rensselaer into the room. The blow may as well be struck now as at any other time. The sudden stroke may take her by surprise. I'll go it, just for luck."

And with this determination, the detective ascended the steps and rung the doorbell. In a few seconds a servant opened the door.

"Is Miss Coralie York in?" the detective asked, blandly.

"Yes, sir," the girl replied.

"Will you be kind enough to tell her that a gentleman desires to see her on important business?"

"Shall I take up your name, sir?"

"No; that is useless; I am an entire stranger to Miss York; she would not know my name. Only be particular to tell her that my business is very important."

Yes, sir.

The servant conducted the detective into the modest little parlor, and then withdrew to bear the message to the lady.

"Now I wonder what sort of a party this is," Bright muttered, as he sat down in a comfortable easy-chair, and waited for the young lady to make her appearance.

He did not have long to wait, for in a few minutes Coralie entered the room.

The moment the detective's eyes fell upon her face, he started as though he had received an electric shock; while Coralie upon her part looked amazed when she beheld the face of the detective officer.

"It is evident that both were strangely excited."

Controlling his wonder with a powerful effort, the detective rose to his feet and bowed to the girl.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Coralie York?" he asked.

The girl gazed with a look of blank amazement into the face of the detective, when his voice fell upon her ear.

"Yes, that is my name," she said, slowly, recovering from her astonishment.

"I beg pardon," exclaimed the detective, suddenly; "but have I not had the pleasure of seeing you before?"

"I think so," she replied, "for your voice is strangely familiar and your face also, but I can not remember where."

"Neither can I," he said, puzzled, "and it is very strange, for I seldom forget a face. But allow me to offer you a chair, as our interview may take up some time."

The two sat down facing each other.

CHAPTER XX.

THE RECOGNITION.

"In the first place, to begin right at the beginning," said Bright, "I am a detective officer."

Coralie started in surprise. "A detective officer!" she exclaimed, in astonishment, not unmixed with alarm.

"Yes, Miss, a detective officer," repeated the gentleman, coolly, never taking his keen eyes off the pretty face of the actress for a moment.

A rapid and a searching glance Coralie cast at the impassive face of the detective, as though she expected therein to read his

thoughts, but the face of the Californian was as a sealed volume.

"A detective officer, and you have business with me?" she asked, slowly, and in a tone of wonder.

"Yes; you must not be astonished at that; we detectives, you know, have business with almost everybody. I suppose of course that you are curious to know what my business is with you?"

"Yes, I frankly confess I am curious."

"I will not keep you long in suspense, but proceed at once to explain. Last night an old gentleman named Harriet was decoyed from the masquerade ball at the Academy of Music to a low den in Water street. A woman acted as the decoy. There, in the Water street dance-house, the old gentleman was induced to drink a glass of drugged wine. He fell asleep, and during his sleep was robbed of a valuable paper."

Coralie's face grew deathly white as she listened to the words of the detective, but beyond that she betrayed no sign of emotion.

"What has this to do with me?" she asked, with a great effort controlling herself and speaking with an unnatural calmness.

"Only that you are the valued woman who, in this matter, acted as the tool of David Van Rensselaer."

Coralie wondered at the knowledge possessed by the detective, but made no reply.

"You do not answer," Bright said, after quite a long pause. "You can not deny that I have spoken the truth. I do not blame you for the part that you have played in this affair, for I fully understand that it was forced upon you, and that, until the last moment, when retreat was impossible, you did not really know what you were doing."

"Suppose that I do not deny the truth, why should you think that I am in possession of the paper stolen from the old gentleman?" she asked, slowly.

"The guess is natural enough; the paper was in the old man's possession when he entered the room. After you departed, the paper was gone," Bright answered.

street, when poor O'Kale fell by his assassin's hand. It was David Van Rensselaer who set fire to the old house to destroy all evidence of his crime. And now he wishes to get possession of this will so that he may rob his half-sister, Alice, of her share of his father's estate. A cool, calculating villain is this same Van Rensselaer.

"But this girl, Alice—is she living?" Coralie asked.

"I hope so; I have a brother detective employed to hunt her up now. Do you know what this old gentleman Hartright declares?"

"No; what?"

"That you are Alice Van Rensselaer!" Coralie shook her head sadly.

"I know that; that is the reason why he went with me so readily from the masquerade. In the tones of my voice even he detected a resemblance to the child confided to his care."

"But join yourself—what do you think of the idea?"

"I wish that it were possible, but I am afraid that it is not," the girl said, mournfully.

"He is strong in the belief. I had an interview with him this morning and almost his last words to me were, that when I found you I would discover the heiress to half of the Van Rensselaer estate. Do you know who your parents were, Sue?"

"No."

"Perhaps, then, the old man may be right in his assertion?" Bright said, hopefully.

"I am afraid not. Last night he told me the story of Alice Van Rensselaer, and though in some particulars it reminded me of my own life, yet the name of the woman to whose care he confided the child was not familiar to me."

"Sit down, Sue, and tell me all that you can remember of your childhood; perhaps it may aid me."

"CHAPTER XXII.

"DIGGING THE MINE."

Coralie drew her chair close to that of her lover, and leaning her head on his shoulder, while his arm encircled her waist, began her story.

"The first I can remember is living in a large wooden house surrounded by trees. I feel sure that this house was in the country. A middle-aged woman whom I used to call aunt took care of me. Her name was Wilson. Her husband was a great, strong, brutal man who used to keep his brim in liquor and then come home and ill-treat her. I think I was about five years old at that time."

"But, can you not remember any of your life before this period that you speak of?" the detective asked.

"Nothing distinctly," the girl replied, slowly; "a sort of dreamy remembrance comes back to me, sometimes, wherein I see other faces, and hear other voices, but it is so shadowy that I can hardly believe it is any thing but fancy. One dark night aunt took me by the hand after having dressed me for walking, and we left the house. I did not understand it then, but I do now; she was flying from her husband. We came to New York. She had a hard struggle for existence, and finally, acting under the advice of the woman with whom she had found shelter, she sent me out into the street with a basket of fruit to sell. The woman's daughter also sold fruit in the street and she instructed me."

"But is your name Susan?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Wilson always called me Dolly, but my street friend said that was no name at all and that I must be called Susan. When I asked aunt if Dolly was truly my name she became angry and scolded me and so at last when any one asked what my name was, I answered Susan."

"Your story affords me no clue," Bright said, slowly. "But don't despair. I've got one of the best men in the detective force on the scent and he'll discover the truth if any one can."

"But, Royal," said the girl, suddenly, "why did you not give your name to the servant, or did you wish to surprise me?"

"You forget, my darling, I hadn't the remotest idea that it was you whom I was going to see," he replied. "How could I guess that Coralie York, the actress, was Sue Wilson, the Orange Girl? Besides, all New York knows me now as James Bright, the Californian detective. Royal Keene has changed, too; you see, in three years."

"But to me you are just the same."

"Just as dear?" he quizzed, roughly, passing his hand lightly over the smooth forehead of the girl.

"Yes," she whispered, lowly and coyly.

"And now I must say good-by," he said, rising. "I've work on hand that must not be delayed."

"When will you come again?" she asked, quickly.

"Will you be at home to-morrow evening?"

"Yes."

"I will come then; good-by."

Again he pressed the little form of the young girl to his heart, kissed the ripe, red lips so full of dewy freshness, and then took his departure.

"If she would only turn out to be the heir now," he murmured, as he walked up the street. "What a terrible vengeance that would be, for me to marry the woman whose presence in the world robs Van Rensselaer of half his fortune! Half his fortune!" he repeated, slowly. "Why not the whole? Why not with one blow crush him to the earth, a beggar?"

The face of the detective grew dark and troubled as he brooded over the question.

"By heaven! I'll do it!" he exclaimed, decidedly, after a long pause, during which he had revolved the subject over in his mind. "I'll hit upon some scheme. First his reputation; then his fortune; and then—shall the gallows play a prominent part in the last act of the drama? We shall see."

As the detective turned into the avenue, he nearly ran over O'ward, the reporter, who was hurrying down the street.

"Hallo!" cried Joe; "you're the very man I want to see."

"Well, what is it?"

"When does that little affair come off?"

"What affair do you mean?"

"What you told me about when we were driving down-town from the masquerade last night—the descent on the club-room."

"Ah, yes, I remember now," Bright said. "I rather think I shall expedite the mine to-night."

"You promised to let me know, you know. It will make a splendid sensation article."

"Yes, particularly when you explain that a descendant of one of the oldest and best

families in New York is the proprietor of the den," Bright said, with a quiet smile.

"Oh, it will make a sensation, sure!" the reporter exclaimed, rubbing his hands together, gleefully.

"Well, meet me at the Fifth Avenue Hotel to-night about nine. I shall know by that time whether it will come off to-night or not."

"Depend upon me; I'll be on hand."

Then the two parted.

Bright proceeded directly to the Central Police Station, and had a long interview with the Superintendent of Police, and when he parted with that gentleman, there was a smile of triumph playing around his lips.

"The first blow to-night," he muttered; "the second will soon follow. I don't intend to give him breathing time between the strokes. Cranshaw may be back to-morrow. If he succeeds in finding out any thing about the heir—any thing that will give me a clue as to where she is—I ask for nothing more."

As Bright turned into Broadway he came face to face with Abrams, the diamond broker.

"Hold on!" he cried, catching that worthy gentleman by the arm.

"What you wants mit me?" exclaimed the Jew, in astonishment, gazing into the face of the other.

"You don't know me, eh?"

"So 'shelp me, I never saw you before!"

"Oh, yes, you have; take a good look at me."

The Jew adjusted his eye-glasses on his nose and surveyed Bright keenly. Gradually a look of recognition came over his face.

"Oh, Moses! if 'tisn't Mister Keene!" And the Jew grasped him cordially by the hand.

"Hush! don't mention the name quite so loud, please," Bright said, drawing the broker to one side.

"Vash is de matter, my tear," asked the Jew, inquiringly.

"You forget that little bit of paper that I deposited with you about three years ago, and which you disposed of to David Van Rensselaer. Oh, Abrams! to go back on a friend in that way!" and the detective shook his head, mournfully.

"It vash not mine fault; you no come as you said and take up de note," the Jew exclaimed, with outstretched hands.

"When a man pours in liquor he generally drives out sense," Bright said, tersely.

"Why, you gave me, bound hand and foot, right into the clutches of my worst enemy."

"So help's me Isaac! I thought he vash a friend of yours all de vash!" Abrams protested.

"You got me into a pretty hobble. I had to get out of the country."

"You leaf your gountree for your gountree's goot, eh?" and the Jew chuckled at the joke.

"Exactly; and now, old boy, I've got another little bit of business with you."

"Dat ish all right. I hafedly much business with you. I haf bought almost every ting you haf in de world, from your diamonds down to your boots, and the jolly broker laughed, boisterously. "You ish a good feller; I likes you very much. You haf something to sell—I gifes you good price for it."

"It is a certain paper."

"No more notes, mine goot friend!"

"Don't be in a hurry," interrupted the detective; "it isn't a note, but a will."

"A will?" exclaimed the Jew, in amazement. "What you s'pose I do mit a will, eh?"

"Sell it!"

"Who would buy such a ting?"

"Only one man in the world, and that man, David Van Rensselaer."

"I no understand."

"Why, it is the will of his father, Philip. This will has just come to light. It rather interferes with David, and he would give a good round price to get his fingers upon the will and destroy it."

"You tink so, eh?" the Jew said, thoughtfully.

"Why, man, I know so. Come, you owe me a little for letting Van Rensselaer get hold of that note. Now, then, I want you to take this will to Van Rensselaer and offer to sell it to him; or, rather go to him and tell him that you know where the will is, and that for a certain price you will place it in his hands."

"Ah, I see, my tear; you vant monish, eh?"

"It's a very natural want; almost everybody in this world is troubled that way."

"Dat ish true; you come mit me to mine office, and I talks mit you."

Arm in arm the two proceeded up the street.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 119.)

Tracked to Death:

THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "HELPER'S HAND," "LONE RANCHER," "SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEATH SHOT.

NOTWITHSTANDING his determination to kill Richard Darke—his passionate impatience to do so—Clancy is checked in the pursuit. He is not so madly reckless as to give his enemy another chance of killing him.

Perceiving the advantage the latter has gained, his own danger by going nearer, he suddenly reins up. And not an instant too soon. He may already be within range of that gun whose bright barrel gleams over the rock, reflecting the moonbeams.

While deliberating what to do he is saluted by a speech:

"I don't know who or what you are. But I warn you to come no nearer. If you do, by—"

Clancy, recognizing Darke's voice, and exasperated by the threat, does not wait for the speech to be finished. He shouts back:

"You red-headed ruffian! If you don't know who I am, you will soon find out. I'm the man you thought you had killed under a cypress-tree in the State of Mississippi! The man who now intends killing you, in fairer fashion, upon a prairie of Texas. Richard Darke, prepare for your death shot!"

The words produced a fearful effect on him hiding behind the rock. He had a thought it might be Simon Woodley; but it was not Woodley who spoke. It appeared to be Charles Clancy; and Clancy it could not be!

Darke felt appalled at the summons; stern, terrible, as if spoken by an avenging angel. Was he still drunk or dreaming?

His gun was nearly gilding from his grasp. But, with a last desperate resolve, and an effort almost mechanical, he raised the piece to his shoulder, took aim, and fired.

Clancy, waiting his reply, saw the flash, the jet, the white smoke puffing skyward; then heard the crack, and, along with it, the "zip" of a bullet, that passed close to his ear—too close for safety.

He remembered that Darke was accustomed to carry a double-barreled gun. The report was that of a smooth-bore. A second shot might be better aimed. He could not return the fire with any chance of hitting his adversary. The sheltering rock, the moon dazzling his eyes, every thing was against him. Besides, he had himself but one barrel—one bullet; it must not be idly spent.

There was no alternative but retreat to a safer distance, and there stay, holding his enemy in sight until he could think of some plan for dislodging him.

He did this. Wrenching his horse round, he rode off some paces, and again faced toward the rock.

There were the two men, both still seated in the saddle; one only seen by the other. And both were now silent, after the short colloquy terminated by the shot—not another word passing between them.

Darke, reflecting, had somewhat recovered from his fright, at least that part of it due to the supernatural. After all, Clancy might have survived the attempt on his life. It may have been he who rescued Helen Armstrong under the live-oak. It must have been—he was alive—he was there!

To Darke the reality was as fearful as that fancied, not less foreshadowing his fate. Although no longer believing his pursuer a specter, but knowing him to be flesh and blood, he felt all the same a sad presentiment of death.

While he was giving way to this, Charles Clancy was cogitating how to accomplish his skulking antagonist. He thought of making a circuit round the rock, but soon abandoned the idea. It could not avail him. His adversary could do the same, keeping the bowlder between. It would be only time wasted.

A yelp interrupted his cogitations. He turned hastily on hearing it. Brasfort was by his side. In the long chase—a trial of speed between two horses—the hound had fallen behind. The halt had enabled it to recover the distance and rejoin its master.

Once up, the dog did not stay. Instinct told him the game was still ahead; and, after giving out the single note of greeting, he passed on in a straight run for the rock.

In ten seconds after, the hound was behind the bowlder; and Clancy, listening, heard whiff caused him to loosen his bridle-rein and urge his horse rapidly in the same direction, tightening the grasp on his gun.

Darke saw the animal coming up, under the moonlight; plainly saw and remembered its markings; remembered, too, how it had troubled him under the cypress-tree, and afterward savagely assailed him. Nemesis, with all the host of hell, seemed now let loose upon him!

The hound was soon by his side, and its hostility in the Mississippi forest was naught to that shown now. It sprang at him like a panther, open-mouthed; at his legs, as they hung dangling in the stirrups. In an instant its fangs were fixed in his calves, causing him to shriek with affright as with pain.

In wild dismay he forgot the horseman, and only thought of the hound. He struggled to shake the animal off, to kill it—at the same time endeavoring to keep behind the bowlder.

But his horse, sharing his affright, no longer obeyed the rein, and prancing about, soon parted from the rock, uncovering his rider completely.

Clancy, coming up, saw the advantage. His rifle was raised quick as for the shooting of a snipe; the clear crack followed, and simultaneously with it, Richard Darke dropped out of his saddle and fell face foremost on the plain.

Clancy, dismounting, advanced toward the prostrate form. At first hastily, to hinder his hound from mutilating it, which the dog seemed determined to do.

On the animal being scolded off, he approached slowly and in silence. When close up he saw that his enemy had ceased to live, and what lay before him upon the plain was but a breathless body.

Stooping over it to see where his bullet had struck, he said:

"In the breast, just where he hit me, thinking it was my Death Shot. Well, he has got his; and God will forgive me for ridding the world of such a villain."

Then, rising erect, with eyes turned toward his slain enemy, he said, in a low, hoarse voice, as if he stood over his mother's grave, and in like solemn tone, he added:

"I've kept my vow. Mother, thou art avenged!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LONE PEDESTRIAN.

Nor long did the victor tarry by the body of his fallen foe. The companionship of the dead is ever painful, even when an enemy; and with no one near, he was appalled.

Something of this stole over Charles Clancy as he stood beside the corpse. For he had no longer any strong passion to sustain him—not even anger. With the death of Darke his vow had been fulfilled. His vengeance was now satisfied, and his heart once more throbbled with the gentler feelings of humanity, as was its wont.

A shudder passed through his frame as he gazed upon Darke's features—sinister even in death. In spite of their forbidding aspect, he felt sad while contemplating them. He winced it had been otherwise, and that the terrible retribution could have been avoided. But it could not. It had been forced upon him.

With this reflection justifying himself, he turned his back upon the corpse, calling Brasfort away from it. The dog still showed hostility to the dead, and would have mutilated the body, if permitted. The canine instinct of ferocity had no generous impulse to appease it, and only yielded to stern words and gestures of menace from its master.

Clancy swung upon his horse, intending to go in search of Jupiter. To do this he must return on his own tracks, for the discovery of which the scent of the hound was once more brought into requisition.

It was no longer necessary that the animal should be incumbered with leash or

hauzie. Both were taken off, and it sprang in full cry along the trail.

It was a short run. Before the dog had gone three hundred yards from the rock, Clancy, keeping close after, galloped in front, and whipped the animal in.

Because he saw coming up, advancing as if to meet him, what appeared to be the man he was starting in search of.

At all events, it was a pedestrian who approached, and he summoned it to be Jupiter. After scanning the figure, and noting the gait, he knew it was Jupiter.

He did not wait for the mulatto to come up. He had checked the hound, because its assistance was no longer needed. Now urging his horse to a quick gallop, he soon after halted a second time, the pedestrian standing by his stirrup.

Jupiter's tale was short and soon told, though it scarce needed telling. He had been following afoot. The bright moonlight had enabled him to do this, as also the pace which Clancy had pursued; necessarily slow, waiting for the hound to do its work. Jupiter had lost sight of him after Darke came in view, and there commenced that straight chase leading on to the rock.

Though neither pursued nor pursuer was any longer visible, he had continued traveling toward the point where they had disappeared from his view.

But while thus uncertainly advancing, he heard sounds that better directed him—shots. Making note of the quarter whence they came, and comparing it with that where the moon was seen near the horizon, he had renewed his bearings, and with all speed kept on. He knew that where the shots had been heard he would find a dead body. It might be that of his master, or his master's enemy. He could not know which; but he had his hopes, with a presentiment that gave him confidence. Clancy's words at parting had inspired him with this. He had taken note of his strength and determination. There was something in the air—something electric—that told him the man of God would triumph and the child of the Devil be discomfited.

As through the morning haze he saw a horseman approaching, even before the latter came near, he knew it was Charles Clancy returning toward him. And he could tell he was returning triumphant; that he had fulfilled the vow so solemnly made.

A few seconds sufficed for all this explanation.

They were about leaving the spot, though undecided which way to take, when, looking behind, they saw that which decided them.

It was a riderless horse, galloping over the plain. He was not going in any direct course, but careering about in circles or spiral curves, the rock that Clancy had lately left appearing to be the pivot. They could see that he carried both saddle and bridle, the latter trailing.

There was no mystery either about the animal's presence or its actions. Clancy knew that the empty saddle had lately been occupied by him who lay dead upon the plain.

His only thought was how to get possession of the horse, and make him available for the mounting of the mulatto.

This purpose was followed by immediate action; which ended in the capture of the riderless steed.

Easily enough was the creature taken. Not accustomed to be alone, after a turn or two upon the open plain, it came back to the spot where it had lost its rider; and delivering itself up to him who had lightened it of its load.

Jupiter, gliding rapidly on, reached the spot shortly after. He stood over the dead body of Richard Darke, gazing down upon it.

Some strange reflections the spectacle must have afforded him. As he looked upon the stiff, outstretched arms lying helplessly along the grass; the hands, with fingers curving like claws, now nerveless; he may have thought how these once clutched a "cowhide" that had scored his own back, leaving "weals" still terribly discernible!

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN DANGER YET.

REJOINED by his faithful servant, each now having a horse, Clancy thought only of returning to the San Saba, and thence on to the Mission.

Before starting, two considerations occupied him—first, about finding the way; second, the necessity for caution in their further movements. They were still in danger from Borlase and his freebooters. Beyond doubt, these would be after them as soon as they recovered from their riotous debauch. Once awake, they would find their prisoner gone, and the mestizo in his blood, as the mulatto had left him. The last would rouse them to a relentless pursuit.

Besides, Jupiter's escape would make them apprehensive about their own safety, and they would strain every nerve to recapture him.

Conjecturing that Jupiter would seek the place where he himself had been put into the "prairie stocks," as Borlase facetiously termed it, they would strike for that point. And their pursuit would be immediate on discovering how things stood.

Judging by the hour of the day, now late morning, they might be seen at any moment. There had been ample time for them to get that far across the plain, supposing them to have started at sunrise.

Thus Clancy reasoned. As he continued to reflect he became still more convinced of the necessity to act with prudence. So far all had gone well. Despite the bitter words which, at parting, Borlase had hissed into his ear, he had now no anxiety about Helen Armstrong.

Jupiter's report, brought from the robbers' rendezvous, had put an end to his apprehensions on that head. The man who lay dead by his side, so far from having her in his arms, had not again seen her. He could trust Simon Woodley for having taken her safe home, though whether to find her father alive he could not tell. That would depend on what had transpired at the Mission. Colonel Armstrong may have been killed, Dupre, and others. The whole body of colonists may have been massacred. The men who came back laden with plunder were capable of any atrocity—even murder by wholesale. Jupiter could not tell what they had done, the robbers about this preserving silence. Even the traitor, Fernand, while fraternizing with him, and apparently intoxicated, had been reticent on that theme.

It was not now the time to dwell upon it. Clancy had other matters to occupy his thoughts. Enough, if he could make good his own and his companion's retreat. To

do this called for circumspection—for the utmost caution. If again taken by Borlase there would be an end of every thing—certain death, then.

Such a catastrophe was not only still possible, but probable.

What was the best course to avoid it? Remain by the rock, and use it as a cover, till darkness again came down? Or at once start for the San Saba, taking their chance of passing unobserved over the plain?

He knew the direction of the river. The still ascending sun gave him this, though not the exact course that would bring him to the gorge leading down to its valley. That was not much. Once on the bluff, he could ride along it till he should discover the sloping descent.

He was anxious to know what had occurred in the colony; impatient to be by the side of her he had rescued. He might find her in affliction, by a murdered father, with heart torn, as had been his own when standing by the grave of his murdered mother. He longed to be with her, to know the worst; and if it was thus, to give sympathy and such consolation as he could.

Thus reflecting, he determined to set forth. But not in rash recklessness. Too much of this spirit he had already reason to repent. Hereafter he would act with more prudence, and put greater trust in sagacity.

So resolving, he commenced a scrutiny of the plain, his object being to make out his course. He must not go toward the place where he had been buried, but the opposite. In what direction was it? How could he tell? Was there any landmark? Where might it be?

The position he occupied was favorable for observation. The rock cropped out from the summit of a ridge, the "divide" between the two great rivers—the San Saba and Colorado. It trended for many miles, longitudinally, with a sharply-defined crest, that resembled the combing of a sea-wave. It was one of those formations, in French trapper phraseology called *coteau de prairie*.

On each side the surface sloped abruptly down, till it reached the general level, the whole eminence having a breadth of some two or three miles.

Clancy commanded a view of the plain on both sides as far as vision could extend. The sun's position in the sky gave him a clue to the points of the compass, as also to the direction in which lay the two rivers.

As he continued attentively to interrogate the surrounding scene, something attracted his glance, at once fixing it.

It was a tree, tall, and of peculiar shape. He thought he remembered it. So thought Jupiter; and, gazing at it, both became sure.

It was the same that had guided the prairie pirates in their traverse of the plain.

It grew conspicuously upon the crest of the ridge, just within sighting distance of the rock. It had also served Jupiter as a landmark on his retreat from the robbers' rendezvous.

The place where Clancy had been planted in the earth was not far off; and his chase after Darke had led him past, though he did not then notice it.

Continuing his survey, he soon made himself familiar with the topography of the plain; saw the direction he ought to take, as also that to be shunned.

Unfortunately, they were the same. To strike for the tree would put him on the trail leading to the San Saba. But it might also bring him in contact with Borlase and his band, should they be coming back that way.

As he was cogitating what course to pursue, there came under his eyes that which at once decided him. To his right, in the direction of the Colorado, something glared upon the surface of the plain. It reflected the sunlight; not from a single solitary point, but several excursions appearing at the same time, and high to each other.

Already experienced in prairie signs, Clancy had no difficulty in reading this. The twinkling points told him of gun-barrels, butts of pistols, bowie-knives, steel bits, and stirrups glistening in the sun. They shone more conspicuously against a dark background, that soon became distinguishable as a body of mounted men.

They were coming from the side of the Colorado. He could have no doubt about who they were. The prairie pirates to all certainty!

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

TO ADVERTISERS.

A few Advertisements will be inserted on this page at the rate of fifty cents per line, nonpareil measurement.

TWO STRANGE BEINGS!

THE PHANTOM RIDER;

OR,

IN SUMMER-TIME.

BY JOE ZOT, JR.

I hear the murmur of the rill:
The sunbeams on it glance and shine;
I look upon it with a thrill,
But oh, it turns no mill of mine!

Far stretch the fields of bearded wheat:
The tossing heads I love to see;
Beneath the light wind's winged feet,
But not a grain belongs to me.

Broad reaches of fair meadowy realms
With clover blossoms overrun,
How soft the light that overwhelms!
How hard the thought that I own none.

Broad fields of tilting corn I see:
Each blade is bright with sunny deck,
How sweet they beckon unto me—
How sad, I could not buy a peck.

The flocks are white upon yon hill,
Against a background of pure green,
They cluster in the woodside still,
Yon farmer owns them and—how mean!

How bright those rural homes appear,
Seen barely through the clambering vine!
And songs of happy wives I hear,
But none, not one of them is mine.

Yon orchard hangs with apples red;
They cling in clusters rare and fine,
Inviting mortals to be fed—
And unless something extraordinary happens,
A pocketful will soon be mine.

*The meaning of the last line is a little indistinct.—Ed.

The "Thousand Islands."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IN THE WILDERNESS."

III.—THE GRAND HAUL!

We were stirring early upon the morning succeeding the raid upon Canada, and after breakfast went down to the boats in company with old Joe and Billy. The boats were long, light-built, but strong craft, furnished with a sufficient number of lines and "spoons," a box for the fish, and two short poles. Each man carried in the little locker in the bow, a kettle, frying-pan, coffee-pot, and various seasonings used in cookery, while the hotel cooks had put up, the night before, the necessities for a square meal, according to the orders of Viator.

We were soon in the boats and speeding away side by side across the water, the boats fairly leaping under the long, clean strokes of the oarsmen. The Clayton fishermen are some in a boat, and although little given to "style," can pull all day without the least sign of fatigue.

As we pulled across toward the nearest fishing-ground, Billy, knowing at a glance our hopeless condition in regard to trolling, proceeded, in a low voice, to give us some information. Each boat is provided with three lines. Two are fastened on short poles—the ends of which are thrust into wooden sockets set into the sides of the boat, the poles crossing each other just in front of the middle thwart, upon which one of the fishermen—when there are two—takes his seat. In the stern of the boat a low chair is placed, and this chair is an apple of discord to the voyagers, as the man who sits in the stern has the best seat, and the privilege of handling the "stern line," a hundred and forty feet in length, and the most destructive of the three. The other lines are twenty feet shorter, which precludes the possibility of their running together, or "fouling."

"Billy" was a glorious oarsman, and it was a sight to see the long ridges of his powerful muscles rise upon his bare brown arm as he bent forward for the stroke, and sent the light boat hissing through the water. Old Joe was no infanter, and we reached the fishing-ground nearly together, when Tom and I, awkwardly enough, began to get out our lines. Viator, that sly old fisher, had already done this, and Joe's boat was moving slowly ahead, the bright spoons hissing just below the surface. Good luck stood my friend, and I had the stern line, and by the aid of Billy, who managed to keep the boat in motion while giving Jim some assistance, the other lines were got out and Billy bent to his oars, keeping the boat in motion just enough to lift the lines off the ground.

I held the stern line in my hand, by Billy's directions, and from time to time gave it a little pull forward, and could hear the dull, tremulous vibration of the spoon, a hundred and forty feet astern. Suddenly, and without warning, as I pulled it forward, I felt a check upon the line and knew that I had struck a fish, and, turning, began to haul in, hand over hand, letting the line drop in a coil into the bottom of the boat as I took it in. Pandemonium broke out in the boat at once, and we, usually staid and sober members of society, pronounced words which would have placed us under the social ban if uttered in the shadow of a church.

"Easy, easy," said Billy. "Don't give him any slack if you can help it, Mr. S.; he's a pretty good 'un."

"A good 'un!" roared Jim. "Why, he's as long as my leg. There, you cussed fool! look out. You'll lose him, cuss you! Now, Timberhead, pull out!" Pull easy, won't you? Steady, can't you? There he is—hurrah!"

"You've got one on that right-hand pole," said Billy. "Look out now; take the pole out and pass the end over to me. That brings the line close to the side and you can get at it easier."

A moment more and Jim was at it, hauling away on a big fish, in a fever of excitement let my fish should by any chance be bigger than his own, and perspiring with the fear of losing him. Foot by foot I dropped the line upon the bottom of the boat, and now a long, pointed head and serrated jaw was thrust out of the water, forty feet astern.

"Pickerel, that is," said Billy. "Bout seven pound, I should say."

"Do you call that a big one, Billy?" I said, eagerly.

"Fair to middlin'," said Billy. "They won't avidge seven pound by no manner of means. This gentleman has got a buster, but he'll lose him, sure as fate, if he lets him have slack that way. Now, Mr. Scribbler, now! Haul him up by the side of the boat, and catch him just back of the gills. Pinch pretty tight."

I obeyed orders, and picked out of the water a fish which weighed within two ounces of the weight given it by Billy, and in a moment more he was lying securely in the box, and my line running out again. Having a little leisure, and swelling with importance at the idea of having grased the first fish, I began to watch Jim and to assist him in an endeavor which would have made demons shed tears of envy. The amount of ornamental blasphemy which he wasted upon that particular fish, upon me, upon Billy, upon all the world, may be imagined when a "wall-eyed bass"—a very peculiar fish, and "gamey" as a

trout—suddenly sprung head on out of the water, shook himself free from the spoon, and went down into the clear depths, followed by maledictions both loud and deep, from the lips of the unhappy fisher.

I won't mention just the words he used, because you know there are some things better imagined than described, and, of course, it cut him to the soul to see the look of calm superiority I assumed, because I had blundered into saving my fish and he had failed. Billy added to his discomfort by saying it was the biggest "wall-eye" he had seen that season, and that it was a great loss. This Joe's comfort made Jim madder than ever, and for a small amount of earth, and ly lucre he would have buried me and my supercilious smile beneath the surface of the St. Lawrence.

And old Joe was not idle while we blundered. As I held the stern line in my hand, and Jim, with much reviling, was letting his run out again, I saw Viator seize the pole in front and pass it over to old Joe, while he began to take in the stern-line. Hardly had he begun to pull, when we knew that he had fastened on a "big 'un," for we saw the old fellow settle back and lay his weight on the line as he hauled away, and the stout linen fairly rung as the fish leaped.

"Got a muskallunge, sure as you live!" said Billy. "Big 'un, too."

Just then we caught a glimpse of the huge head of the monster rising from the foam, and Viator uttered a victorious whoop and hauled away with might and main. I never encourage the feeling of envy. It is mean, unsportsmanlike and foolish in the extreme, but I did envy Viator the untold happiness of hauling in that fish. It is no use to reflect that I should have lost him in two seconds, as I should infallibly have done had I been at the line. Old Joe stopped rowing and lifted a gaff hook, and by the united strength of the two men a long, graceful fish, weighing thirty-four pounds, was landed in the boat—the first big muskallunge of the season!



THE BANK CLERK.

No use to talk of fishing after that! The lines were taken up, the boats headed for each other, and for half an hour we had it, hot and nob, over the mighty prize. Then we separated and went on our way, doing mighty execution among the finny tribes; and when the sun was at meridian we landed on the island, where Joe and Billy, shepherds both, began the preparation of an unctuous feast.

The Bank Clerk.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

"WELL, Mr. Keeneye, what success?" This question fell from the lips of one of the prominent bank presidents of Cincinnati, and was addressed to a shrewd-looking middle-aged man, who bore the appearance of a detective.

A private room contained the twain, and just before putting the question, Glyndon Mansard had turned on the gas, for the room was growing dark.

"What success?" echoed Abel Keeneye. "Ah! I wish you had not asked that question."

The bank president started. "And why, Mr. Keeneye?" he said. "Is the trail of the purloiner yet covered?"

"No," and a blush of triumph illumined the man-hunter's face; "quite the reverse, my dear Mansard. I have unearthed the villain."

"Ha!" exclaimed the old man, for Glyndon Mansard's hair was white as snow-flakes; "and pray who is he?"

"Walter Edgarton?"

"Walter Edgarton? Somebody has been leading you over a false trail."

"Then come with me, and I will prove my words."

The detective rose with self-confident air, and a minute later the twain were hurrying down Fifth-street, destined for one of the many fashionable gaming-houses in which the Queen City of the West abounds.

Glyndon Mansard could not believe his trusted clerk the purloiner of the missing bank-notes which, from time to time, had mysteriously disappeared from the vault.

Now but ten dollars would be taken, then fifty would disappear, as suited the whim or need of the thief. He felt that the bank walls inclosed the rascal, and for several weeks Abel Keeneye, an experienced Chicago detective, had espionaged the employees of the institution—at last with the result he had just broken to the aged president.

Walter Edgarton had been in the bank's employ for five years, and during this period not a whisper against his honesty had reached the ears of the officers or public. Upon his earnings a mother, smitten with bodily affliction, depended, and his

good qualities had admitted him to Glyndon Mansard's parlor, and the society of his beautiful and sole child, Myrtle. The young clerk had access to the vaults, and his duties called him beyond those massive doors frequently. Then how easy was it for him to abstract the precious store, for none would ever deem him guilty, if, indeed, the theft was ever discovered.

Glyndon Mansard did not question the detective regarding their destination as they hurried down the great thoroughfare, and when Keeneye paused upon the stoop of a royal building, he guessed what beast dwelt beyond the portals.

A colored servant admitted them, and through a circular opening in a door they gazed upon the fighters of the tiger, while from the gamblers, they remained concealed.

"Do you see him?" questioned Glyndon Mansard, with his eyes riveted upon Abel Keeneye, who was looking through the opening.

"Do be patient, Mr. Mansard; the room is quite full to-night, and—Ha! by my soul! yonder he is. Why did I not see him before?"

"Where, Abel Keeneye?" cried the excited banker, clutching the man-hunter's arm and jerking him from the door. "Where, where is the man you accuse of theft?"

The detective designated a youth who sat at a marble-topped card-table in the furthest corner of the room.

The banker gazed upon the marked one a long time before he spoke. He felt that he saw before him the clerk who, for years, had been above suspicion—the man who had handled thousands of his and the public's money—the one with whom he had trusted his only child, and he believed that Myrtle loved him. The sight threw Glyndon Mansard into a rage, turned his respect into bitter malignance, and had not Abel Keeneye restrained him, he would have rushed between the players, and accused the clerk of the crime imputed to him.

"I reiterate that I never stole a dollar," was the quick and honesty-burdened reply, "and, Glyndon Mansard, were it not for your gray hairs, and the lovely creature who calls you father, this clenched hand had long since sent you to the floor, Sir, I crave the trial you refuse me. Before a court, sir, I could prove my innocence—prove that you never saw me in a gambling-den."

Glyndon Mansard smiled.

"Go!" he shouted a moment later. "Go! gambler—thief—ingrate!"

"Father! father!" and a pair of lovely white hands encircled the passioned banker's arm, "cease! cease! I love him."

The old man did cease, but turned with the fury of the tiger upon his child.

"What?"

"I love Walter, and more, father, this hand is promised him."

The banker's skinny hand rudely gripped his daughter's shoulder.

"Myrtle, recall that promise—tear from your heart whatever affection you bear your thief, or else," his voice trembled for he dearly loved his child, "or else, go out into the world homeless, accursed, the villain's consort."

"Then from beneath your roof I go!" she cried, unhesitatingly, "for I believe him as innocent of your charges as the babe unborn."

Glyndon Mansard groaned, but he was not the man to retract a single uttered sentence. The sternness of heart exhibited in his younger years, had grown with the waning lustre.

He knelt his lips with anger and pain, and stepping from his daughter's side, threw wide the door that opened into the bank officer's private room.

"Go!"

It was all he said, and hand in hand the accused and accursed walked from the old man's presence.

"The giddy girl!" he murmured, "she'll soon consider, and tear the burglar from her heart; then she will come to the pater-

nal nest again. But that guilty man! and to think that he should add falsehood to his other crimes!"

As Walter Edgarton stepped into the bank, he grasped the cashier's hand.

"Time will straighten out this," he said. "I am entangled in a network of conspiracy; but soon, sir, I will stand clear of the meshes, and vindicate my assailed honor to the world."

The cashier smiled hopefully; but when the twain turned their backs upon him, he shook his head and murmured:

"Never!"

From the private business room of the Citizens' Bank, wherein the scenes just recorded were enacted, Walter Edgarton took the woman he loved to his own humble home, in a distant part of the Queen City, and betook himself to the vindication of his character.

His first search was for Abel Keeneye, the detective; but that individual, after obtaining a goodly sum for his work, had left the city, and the bank clerk trailed him to Chicago, his home, in vain. He seemed to know that an injured man was on his track.

The young couple's future seemed an endless night, and men who once respected the trusted clerk, now pointed the finger of scorn at him, till it seemed as though he must believe himself guilty.

"I wonder what's become of them?" mused Glyndon Mansard, one night, "and I wonder, too, if he still fights the tiger?"

Half an hour later he entered the striped beast's den, and stood among its excited denizens.

"Ha! there he is!" he suddenly exclaimed, and, seized with an uncontrollable impulse, he stepped toward the distant wall, his eyes riveted upon—Walter Edgarton?

All at once the old banker paused. The young man had staggered from the table, with a revolver clutched in his hand.

"I've lost all, all!" he cried. "I'm a beggar, and now the revolver is trumps!"

Men sprung forward to prevent the suicidal act; but they were too late—the man was dying when they reached his side.

"Here! old man, ain't your name Mansard?"

His eyes rested upon the banker.

"It is."

"Then listen. For money to gamble, I impersonated the honest man whose counterpart my features are—not my heart. George Byron and Abel Keeneye sought me for their purpose. I am not Walt Edgarton, as you see now. George Byron is the thief; believe me, old man, for I am dying."

Glyndon Mansard was astounded, and before he could speak the suicide—the arch villain's tool—was dead.

A few minutes later George Byron, the

cashier of the Citizens' Bank, was arrested, and confessed his crime. He wanted money, and hoped, after the punishment of the innocent clerk, to wed Myrtle Mansard. Abel Keeneye soon discovered the cashier to be the true thief; but the twain resolved to work together, and accidentally encountered Edgarton's dissolute double, whom they molded to their liking.

The day that followed Glyndon Mansard's discovery, Walter Edgarton and Myrtle returned to the banker's home, and the wedding that soon followed was the most brilliant hymeneal affair of the season.

Thus, by the suicide's pistol, was honor vindicated, and to-day, in Cincinnati, a bank window bears the names of "Mansard & Edgarton!"

Forecastle Yarns.

BY C. D. CLARK.

III.—THE MAST-HEAD TRAGEDY.

"WHAT had sent young George Carter to sea before the mast was only known to himself, for he never spoke of his previous life to any of his shipmates. I'm an old sailor, and I've seen rough usage in my day, but never yet has anything touched me so deeply as this story I am about to tell. There was something so winning in the ways of this poor lad, his smiling face, and his golden brown hair, which made me his friend from the moment he set foot on our decks. The rest of the men before the mast seemed to agree with me, for none of the tricks usually played on boys were attempted on him. Poor lad! his was a hard fate, and I, his friend, am left to write his story."

"He had one enemy, and one in whose power it was to do him great injury—the second-mate—a dark-faced, savage-looking man from Maine. I've seen hard faces in my time, but never one I dreaded more than that of 'Cranky Bill,' otherwise Mr. William Sloan, second-mate of the Curlew. His under jaw stuck out below the upper, and a cut he had got from a knife had drawn down the under lip and made him look as if he was always laughing. It wasn't a winning smile, though, and we were afraid of him to a man. For why? He was the sort of chap to catch up a handspike, or a belaying-pin, and give it to a man over the head 'thout any why or wherefore, and we didn't like it, now."

"I don't know why he hated George, but hate him he did, and I could see he meant to do him harm. Time and again I've seen him thrash that boy with a piece of knotted marlin until he was black all over, and for nothing, too. The captain didn't know it, bless you, because we were not such Johnny Raws as to go and tell him! If we had, there ain't many whaling captains going to interfere between an officer and the men, no matter what the men do. They've got to keep the men down, because, if they do learn their power, Lord help the officers, that's all!"

"So George took his collings like a man and didn't complain. We got into the North Seas, passed through the straits, and George was standing forward, doing no harm whatever, when he happened to stumble on a coil of rope and tipped over a can of spirits the mate had set against the bulk-heads of the fore-cabin. The mate came forward and caught up a bucket of water and emptied it all over the boy, and you know how cold the water is in those seas."

"Go aloft and cool off now, you young monkey! Shin up to the fore-to-gallant cross-trees and wait till I call you."

"George looked at him and his lips began to quiver, but the mate ran at him like a tiger, and scared the poor boy so that he jumped for the ratlines and went up to the cross-trees. It was bitter cold—the coldest day we had yet—but the brute didn't care for that. I seen what he had done and went below, put on a long pea-coat and began to go aloft, but the blag'ard saw me."

"Stetson, ahoy! where are you going now?"

"Up into the top, to look out for spouts," says I. But he knew that I was going up to give the boy the coat, because he knew that I liked him."

"Lay down from aloft, you, Stetson," he roared. "I'll send you aloft if I want you to go."

"Of course there was nothing for it but to come down, and I stayed on deck, looking up once in awhile to the cross-trees, where the boy sat in the fore-wind. I knew he was drenched to the skin, and I tried to call the mate's attention to it by offering to swap up the water on the deck."

"Never you mind, Stetson," he said. "That young swab took most of it aloft with him."

"It's mighty cold up there, sir, and— I didn't wait to finish, for he caught up a belaying-pin and made for me, and I ran below. Half an hour after, I looked up the companion, and saw George seated on the cross-trees, with his arm round the mast, and 'Cranky Bill' planking the deck below him. I didn't dare to go on deck while he was there, and his watch lasted half an hour longer. I never passed a longer thirty minutes than then. Twice I thought I heard the boy hailing the deck, but I couldn't tell sure; but when the mate's watch was up I went on deck, and the captain was there. I determined to tell him, if I died for it, and went up and touched my hat and asked if he would please call the boy down, because his clothes were wet and he would freeze. The captain looked up and saw him, and called him down. George didn't answer, and I looked at the captain, and neither of us needed to say a word, for I was up the rigging like a cat and got to the boy. It was as I feared. There, with his cold cheek pressed against the mast, and an icy dew upon his face, his blue eye staring wide open, and the water frozen into his curly hair, sat little George, dead!"

"Yes, dead. He went up to the top drenched through, and the fierce wind soon chilled him so that he could neither move nor speak. We took him down and made the mate come on deck and look his victim in the face, and then only because we loved the captain were we kept from putting him where he had put the boy. But he had his punishment, for, after he had lain a day or two in the 'brig,' we found him raving and tearing at the bars because he said George had come into the 'brig' and put his icy hands upon his heart. And, two days after, he died miserably, and if ever a man, deserved a horrible death, he was the one."